


The
Glory And Joy Of The
Resurrection
(1902)



James Paton



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James Paton

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The Glory and Joy

of the

Resurrection

By
James Paton, D.D.

Author of "Beautiful Characters," &c.

Editor of "John G. Paton," &c.

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"GLORIA RESURRECTIONIS."

Bengel.

THE height of my ambition is—that, to devout Readers of this little book, and to thoughtful Students of this great New Testament theme, there may come some portion of the glory and joy which manifestly thrilled the heart and fired the brain of the followers of Jesus in those Early Apostolic Days; nay, even, something of the same gladness of Soul, and sure foretaste of Victory, as I myself humbly claim to have experienced in penning these pages.

May that portion be yours, and I shall be thrice rewarded!

JAMES PATON.

EASTERTIDE,

GLASGOW, 1902.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE PLACE AND VALUE OF THE RESURRECTION	
INTRODUCTORY NOTE	xv
BOOK I.	
IN THE FOUR GOSPELS	i
BOOK II.	
IN THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES	15
BOOK III.	
IN THE EARLIER EPISTLES OF ST. PAUL	53
BOOK IV.	
IN THE LATER EPISTLES OF ST. PAUL	123
BOOK V.	
IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS	165
BOOK VI.	
IN THE FIRST EPISTLE OF ST. PETER	179
BOOK VII.	
IN THE APOCALYPSE	203

ANALYSIS OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTORY: SPECIAL THEME DEFINED . . .	xv
 BOOK FIRST.—THE PLACE AND VALUE OF THE	
RESURRECTION IN <i>THE FOUR GOSPELS</i> : . . .	1
i. The Theory of Resurrection by Theft . . .	3
ii. The Theory of Resurrection by Illusion . . .	4
iii. First Impressions of the Resurrection — Belief and	
Unbelief	7
iv. Jesus Himself alone prepared for the Resurrection . .	12
v. The Resurrection, a Moral and Spiritual Necessity . .	13
GOETHE'S SETTING OF THE GOSPEL FACT	14
 BOOK SECOND.—THE PLACE AND VALUE OF THE	
RESURRECTION IN <i>THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES</i> : . .	15
i. The Apostles, Divinely Appointed Witnesses to the Fact .	18
ii. The Resurrection, the only possible Explanation of	
Pentecost	19
iii. The Risen Jesus, and the Miracle of Healing	22
iv. The Distinctive Message in all Apostolic Teaching . .	23
v. The First Martyr, and the Vision of the Glorified Son	
of Man	26
vi. The Resurrection, and the Conversion of Saul of Tarsus .	28
vii. The Resurrection, and the basis of the Gospel to the	
Gentiles	33
viii. The Continued and Unflinching Witness-bearing of the	
Apostles to the Resurrection everywhere and at all	
costs	36

	PAGE
a. At Antioch in Pisidia	36
b. At Thessalonica	38
c. At Athens	40
ix. The Resurrection and what it involves, dearer to St. Paul than life itself : <i>e.g.</i>	42
a. When at bay before the Sanhedrim	42
b. When at the Judgment Bar of Felix	44
c. When at the Judgment Bar of Festus	46
d. When delivering his <i>Apologia</i> before Agrippa	48
x. The Faith of all New Testament Christians	50
CONCLUSION, AND SUMMARY OF THE ARGUMENT	50

BOOK THIRD.—THE PLACE AND VALUE OF THE RESURRECTION IN THE <i>EARLIER EPISTLES</i> OF ST. PAUL :		53
i.	The Evidence from <i>The First Epistle to the Thessalonians</i>	57
a.	Their Turning from Idols, and their Waiting for the Return of Jesus, based upon belief in His Resurrection	57
b.	Their hopes regarding the Blessed Dead, all hinged upon the Resurrection	59
c.	The Resurrection, the supreme plea for living as Sons of the Day	60
ii.	The Evidence from <i>The Epistle to the Galatians</i>	62
a.	St. Paul's independence as an Apostle and a Witness	62
b.	St. Paul, the Ambassador of a living King	65
iii.	The Evidence from <i>The Epistle to the Romans</i>	67
a.	No Resurrection would mean no Deity for Jesus	68
b.	No Resurrection would mean no Justification for Men	69
c.	No Resurrection would mean no Eternal Life	71
d.	No Resurrection would mean no New Obedience	72
e.	No Resurrection would mean no Bridegroom for the Soul	73
f.	No Resurrection would mean no Quickening for the Body	74
g.	No Resurrection would mean no High Priest in the Heavens	76
h.	No Resurrection would mean no Way of Salvation	78
i.	No Resurrection would mean no Lordship over Dead and Living	80
	THE ARGUMENT SUMMARISED	82

ANALYSIS OF CONTENTS

xi

	PAGE
iv. The Evidence from <i>The Two Epistles to the Corinthians</i>	84
a. The Resurrection, and its bearing on Sins of the Flesh	85
b. The Great Resurrection Chapter (1 Cor. xv.) and the <i>Seven Steps</i> on the Stairway of Argument	88
(1) That the Gospel itself is based on the fact of the Resurrection	90
(2) That the Denial of the Resurrection is both Irrational and Incredible	91
(3) That the Resurrection is a Necessity in the Divine Order	94
(4) That the Denial of the Resurrection is inconsistent with their own custom of Baptism for the Dead	96
(5) That no Resurrection means for Man the life of the Brute	97
(6) That the Difficulties which beset the Resurrection are greatly relieved if not entirely solved	99
x. By analogies from the processes of Nature herself; e.g., the buried grain	100
y. By examples of Identity side by side with great diversity, e.g.:—	102
1st. "Flesh," common to all Animals, yet diverse in all Species	102
2nd. "Bodies," common to Earthly Inhabitants, and to Heavenly, yet how diverse	103
3rd. "Sun, Moon, and Stars," with their Identity of Light, yet Diversity of Glory	104
This argument applied to the Resurrection	105
z. By belief in a "Spiritual" body, shown to be as reasonable as belief in a "Natural" body	106
1st. Consonant with Holy Scripture; "First" and "Second" Man	107
2nd. In harmony with Nature; "First," the Animal—"thereafter," the Spiritual	108
(7) That the Resurrection means Victory over Death and Hades	109
Practical effects of all this transcendent Doctrine	114
c. The Bridge to Glory, and the one Key-stone of the Arch	116
SUMMARY OF THE ARGUMENT FROM THE <i>EARLIER</i> EPISTLES	120

	PAGE
BOOK FOURTH.—THE PLACE AND VALUE OF THE RESURRECTION IN THE <i>LATER EPISTLES</i> OF ST. PAUL :	
i. The Evidence from <i>The Epistle to the Ephesians</i> , The Encyclical of St. Paul	123
a. The Exceeding greatness of the Power that wrought in the Raising of Jesus, now working in us	126
b. Analogy betwixt Resurrection and Regeneration	127
ii. The Evidence from <i>The Epistle to the Philippians</i> The Love Letter of St. Paul	130
a. The Risen Christ, the Well Spring of all spiritual life	132
b. The Resurrection "out from among the Dead," the Supreme Aim of every Follower of Christ	133
iii. The Evidence from <i>The Epistle to the Colossians</i> , St. Paul's Letter of Christian Philosophy	138
a. The First-Born from the Dead, the only key to a Divine Philosophy of the Universe	142
b. The <i>Pleroma</i> of Godhead in Jesus, and the Vanity of all other Mediation	143
c. The Christian Philosophy, and the Duties and Trials of this Earthly Existence	149
iv. The Evidence from <i>The Second Epistle to Timothy</i> , St. Paul's Letter of Martyrdom	154
a. The Testing time for the Value of Religious Faith	158
b. Two Facts that sustain the Martyrs of Christ	160
(1) The Eternal Purpose of the Father's love	160
(2) The Resurrection, abolishing Death and revealing Immortality	160
SUMMARY OF THE ARGUMENT FROM THE <i>LATER EPISTLES</i>	163
 BOOK FIFTH.—THE PLACE AND VALUE OF THE RESURRECTION IN <i>THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS</i> :	
i. The Relationship of Christianity to Mosaism	165
ii. The <i>Apologia</i> of this book, presupposing the Resurrection	168
iii. The direct Evidence, set forth from this Epistle	169
a. The Dying and Rising again of Jesus, the destruction of him that had the power of Death	171
b. The <i>Principia</i> of Christianity, all hinging upon the Resurrection of Jesus	174
SUMMARY, AND PRACTICAL ISSUES, OF THE ARGUMENT	177

ANALYSIS OF CONTENTS

xiii

	PAGE
BOOK SIXTH.—THE PLACE AND VALUE OF THE RESURRECTION IN <i>THE FIRST EPISTLE OF ST. PETER</i>	179
i. The unassailable Historic Value of this Document	181
ii. The characteristic Note of the Epistle— <i>Consolation</i>	182
iii. Analysis of the Evidence from St. Peter	184
a. The Resurrection, the foundation of Christian Hope	184
b. The Resurrection, basing Christian Faith on God alone	187
c. The Resurrection, placing all duties and trials in their true light	192
iv. St. Peter's Teaching all Confirmed :—	197
a. By a glimpse of the disembodied Spirit of <i>Jesus in Hades</i>	198
b. By a glimpse of the glorified Body and Soul of <i>Jesus in the Heavens</i>	201
SUMMARY OF THE ARGUMENT FROM THIS EPISTLE	202

BOOK SEVENTH.—THE PLACE AND VALUE OF THE RESURRECTION IN <i>THE APOCALYPSE</i>	203
i. The Unique Witness of this Book to the Resurrection	206
ii. The Preface, presupposing the Resurrection of Jesus	208
iii. The Vision of the Son of Man; its bearing on the Resurrection	209
a. The Disciple's portrayal of the glorified Jesus	210
b. The Proclamation of Jesus regarding Himself	211
iv. The Evidence from <i>The Epistles to the Seven Churches</i>	213
a. As implied in the <i>Titles</i> assumed by Jesus	213
b. In the <i>Promises</i> of blessing and glory made by Jesus	214
c. All of which are unthinkable, if Jesus be not risen	215
v. The Lamb and the Seven-sealed Book, in the light of the Resurrection	217
vi. The Ministry of the Lamb in Paradise, in the light of the Resurrection	219
vii. The Cumulative Evidence from the Lamb once Dead, now Reigning	222
a. The Lamb with the Hundred Forty and Four Thousand	222

ANALYSIS OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
b. The Fall of Babylon, and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb	222
c. The Open Heavens, and the Rider on the White Horse	223
d. The Holy Jerusalem, and the Lamb as He had been slain	224
SUMMARY OF THE ARGUMENT FROM <i>THE APOCALYPSE</i> .	225
CONCLUDING SURVEY OF THE WHOLE FIELD . . .	227

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

OUR SPECIAL THEME

Is Jesus Christ now living or dead? Is He resting in His grave, like other men, or alive at God's right hand and reigning in the Heavens?

Belief in the Resurrection of Jesus is the direct and the final test of all genuine Christian fellowship. It is a practical as well as a spiritual impossibility, for those who think of Him as still asleep in His Tomb, and those who think of Him as now alive on His Throne, ever to have the deepest communion in worship or in life.

We set ourselves therefore to inquire, with the Bible in our hands, *what was the place and value of the Resurrection in the life and teaching of Apostolic Men and Apostolic Days*. We shall trace this theme through Gospels, Acts, and Epistles; and we trust that the Glory and Joy of the Resurrection may enter as fully into our Souls as into theirs, and may give to us the gladness and the victory it gave to them.

BOOK FIRST

THE PLACE AND VALUE OF THE RESURREC- TION IN THE GOSPELS

NOTE.

Quotations are taken from the *Revised Version*.

BOOK FIRST

THE PLACE AND VALUE OF THE RESURRECTION IN THE GOSPELS

OUR first inquiry must be : *What is the testimony of the Holy Gospels ?* What light do they throw upon the place and value of the Resurrection in the life and teaching of Apostolic Men and Apostolic Days ?

I.

It was perfectly well known, even to His enemies, how Jesus of Nazareth had declared that He would rise again from the dead. The words of the Chief Priests and Pharisees to Pilate were : "Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while He was yet alive, 'After three days I rise again.'"¹ They professed to be terrified, lest haply the Disciples might "steal" Him away, and so the last error should be worse

¹ Matt. xxvii. 63.

than the first,—if perchance the People came to believe that He *was* risen from the dead !

A dead Christ they knew how to deal with ; but what if Jesus should face them again alive ? If that came about, however, in any sense at all, the very idea had never crossed their minds that it was possible in any other way than by fraud ; other Resurrection there could be none than a Resurrection by theft. For anything else they were absolutely unprepared.

II.

But His Own Disciples were as utterly unexpected of the actual Rising of Jesus from among the Dead as were his murderers themselves. The possibility of such a thing, despite His premonitions, had never entered their minds at all ; much less had their brains conceived any plot to give it a semblance of reality. Look at the facts of the case.

When Mary went and told “them that had been with Him,” while they yet mourned and wept together, “that He was alive and had been seen of her,” it is flatly declared that they “disbelieved” her.¹

Again, when Mary “and the other Women”

¹ Mark xvi. 11.

told these things "to the Eleven and to all the rest" their words appeared in their sight nothing but "idle talk," and they "disbelieved" them.¹ So little was any single Disciple in that mood of expectancy which alone prepares the mind for receiving and believing mere illusions!

Further, when, on the evening of the same day, the Two from Emmaus appeared in the Upper Room, and rehearsed to the Eleven all that happened unto them, it is emphatically declared, "neither believed they them."² So that the fifteen or eighteen hours that had elapsed since Mary's open vision had tended rather to harden the Disciples in their scepticism than to make them more eager to believe the story of the Resurrection.

Nay, most remarkable of all, when, as the Two were still repeating their story and appealing in vain for belief, the risen Jesus Himself suddenly "stood in their midst" and upbraided "their unbelief and hardness of heart" for not believing them that had seen Him³—so little were they prepared for His actual Rising from the dead and Coming back to them again, so little could they take in that solemn and joyful reality as a fact, that they gave way to a miserable and abject excitement—"they were terrified and

¹ Luke xxiv. 8-11. ² Mark xvi. 13. ³ Ibid. xvi. 14.

affrighted, and supposed that they had beheld a Spirit!"¹ A state of mind no whit more respectable than the white lips of a child, when the foolish nurse cries, "*A Ghost! A Ghost!*"

Instead, then, of finding heads and hearts prepared to be deluded,—eager to believe their own illusions or the delusions of others,—it would almost seem as if they were on the contrary rather inclined to deny their own senses, sight and touch and hearing, not less than the demonstrable facts before them. For, when Jesus "showed them His hands and His feet," they still "believed not" for joy, but "wondered." Their very wonder seemed to warrant their hesitation to commit themselves to a belief for which they were so utterly unprepared; until at last, *but only at last*, every barrier was broken down by what may be called a physical demonstration of the Resurrection of Jesus—He took a piece of broiled fish and a honeycomb and "did eat before them."²

It is as certain, therefore, as anything in human affairs can be, that not one of the Disciples was longing for, or dreaming of, the reappearance of Jesus, or was in any mood to grasp at or be carried away by Ghostlike visions. And, consequently, the showy theory of the great

¹ Luke xxiv. 37.

² Ibid. xxiv. 42-43.

French critic and romancist lacks the one foundation that could have given it an air of plausibility. The imagination of Mary Magdalene did not "accomplish" the Resurrection. She neither dreamed of such an event nor expected it. Her heart and brain were preoccupied with another and an altogether different vision,—the *dead* Jesus, whom she had come to embalm.

III.

From the very first, however, Belief and Unbelief, Faith and Doubt, regarding the Resurrection of Jesus, have been strangely intermingled. Closely allied, they have run side by side, as it were, on parallel lines. And does not this suggest to us that, as in the case of the other great cardinal facts of Redemption, namely, the Incarnation and the Atonement, faith in the Resurrection, also, *implies a certain moral element*, a disposition of the heart, a spiritual insight? This is what St. Paul would call the spiritual sense, without which no amount of merely intellectual light will necessarily beget faith. In other words, the vision of the Spirit or the Soul is indispensable, as well as the vision of the Understanding.

Look, for example, at Peter and John, types in

themselves of doubt at one time and of faith at another.

Peter, running to the Tomb, panting after the swifter and younger John, stooping and looking in, and at last entering, beheld the linen cloths lying, and the napkin that was upon His head rolled up in a place by itself; and yet the only effect for the time was—"he departed to his Home, wondering,"—*wondering*, but so far quite unable to open his mind to the idea that Jesus had risen, that Jesus was alive; for "as yet they knew not the Scripture that He must rise again from the dead." ¹

John, also, the most likely of them all, by his genius, by his capacity of love, to open his mind and heart to the idea of the Christ's return, is one of those of whom it is recorded, "Certain of them that were with us went to the Tomb, and found it even so as the Women had said; *but Him they saw not.*" ² John's swift love carried him first to the Tomb. He stooped, he looked in, he saw the linen cloths lying there. By and by, encouraged by Peter's bolder faith, he too entered in, he saw and "believed" in—the empty Tomb; that was no illusion! But *Him* he saw not;—there was no such dream or vision to comfort his soul; no helpful apparition for the eyes,

¹ Luke xxiv. 12.; John xx. 6-9.

² Luke xxiv. 24.

no suggestive illusion for the brain ; in fact, he was in no mood for these things ! His hope was dead. Not even the mighty affection of the beloved Disciple thought of conjuring up a ghost of the departed Jesus. All was bald and blank. His brain was as empty as was the empty Tomb ! *Him they saw not.*

Nay, more amazing still, when the whole of the Eleven, as the evening shadows were falling around them on that Resurrection Day, were shown His hands and His feet, a struggle went on within their souls even in His living presence,—Faith and Doubt wrestling there for mastery ! They could not believe it “for joy.”¹ They were “glad” when they saw Jesus ;² but they “still disbelieved”—they “still wondered !” They were in a mood to question and to deny ; they were in no mood to be swept away by illusions. And so far was this carried, that, even when they saw Jesus, they still believed not for joy ;—as we say, the News was too good to be true.

That all this is fact,—is a faithful picture of the mind and heart of these Disciples,—has been crystallised for us in the concrete experience of Thomas Didymus. He is the typical Sceptic, that is *doubter*, or *questioner*, in all the Apostolic circle. But, in regard to the Resurrection, he

¹ Luke xxiv. 41.

² John xx. 20.

only put into ringing words what all the rest acted on and intensely felt,—nothing but ocular demonstration would avail! The wound of the “spear,” the print of the “nails”—these alone would convince him!¹

So Thomas thought; but he was far better than his word, as we shall see. The Doubter at length beheld something grander far than wounds and nail-prints. He saw the living Christ Himself. And, as usually happens with the Soul that wrestles towards God through doubts and fears and sore anxieties, Thomas surpassed them all in his transcendent faith when he actually did believe. That was on the Second Resurrection Day, the Second Lord's Day in Christian history. And it was sanctified by Jesus pronouncing a Benediction on Didymus for his glorious testimony—“My Lord and my God”²—a testimony which, every Sunday from then till now, has been renewed by all those ransomed souls of the type of Didymus, to whom, despite doubts and questionings, there has come at length the vision of the living Christ. The Doubt, the Wonder, the Mystery may remain; but the Disbelief is for ever swallowed up in the light of that living Presence—“My Lord and my God.”

Finally, as illustrative of this twofold influence,

¹ John xx. 25.

² Ibid. xx. 28.

produced by the evidence of the Resurrection—on some, Faith ; on others, Disbelief or Doubt—ponder over these two facts, recorded ingenuously by the Evangelists ; not certainly without a clear perception of the use that might be made of one of them to disparage the doctrine of the Resurrection, at least by a certain type of mind, through all time. St Matthew tells us that when Jesus, by appointment, appeared to a multitude of witnesses on a certain mountain in Galilee, the believers saw and “worshipped Him” ; while, on the very same occasion, some saw and yet “doubted.”¹ Again, St. Luke tells us that afterwards, on the Ascension Day, those who beheld Him rise from Olivet, and go up to the Father, “worshipped” Him, and returned to Jerusalem “with great joy,”² as if the prolonged struggle betwixt Faith and Doubt—the Forty Days since the Resurrection—had then at last ended in the triumph of a joyful Belief. They had now seen Him ascending to the Heavens. They believed that they would as certainly see Him return again from the Sky, as they had seen Him return from the Sepulchre. And the life and the teaching that sprang from that faith have created, or will yet create, a new Earth and a new Humanity —“Glory to God in the highest !”

¹ Matt. xxviii. 17.

² Luke xxiv. 52.

IV.

From the first page of the Gospel Records to the last, one Person, and one only, was prepared for and steadily anticipated the Resurrection; *and that was Jesus Himself*. It was part of His Plan in coming to this Earth. It was embraced in the Holy Purpose of the Father in giving His Son to Mankind. It was no after-thought on the part of God; it was no surprise to Jesus, as it was to His followers. To them it was an incredibility; to Him it was a blessed forecast!

The Women who, rising early with the rising Sun, brought spices in their hands to anoint His dead Body, but far more precious love in their hearts, to refresh His living Soul, are reminded by the Two Shining Ones how He had told them, while yet in Galilee, "that the Son of Man would be crucified, and on the third day would rise again."¹

The Two on the road to Emmaus are rebuked, gently, but firmly, for not seeing, as they had often been taught, that it "behoved the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory;"² that is, through the Gateway of the Resurrection from the Grave and the Ascension to God's right hand.

¹ Luke xxiv. 7; Mark xvi. 7; Matt. xxviii. 16.

² Luke xxiv. 26.

The Eleven, even more pointedly, are reminded by the risen Christ Himself of the "Words" that He had spoken while yet with them, regarding the fulfilment of all things in the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms concerning Himself. And then, by breathing the Holy Ghost upon them, and opening their minds to understand the Scriptures, He testified—"Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the Dead the third day."¹ This was the necessary, the indispensable preliminary, for the further fulfilment of His Mission to the Earth, namely, the proclamation, through them as His Witnesses, of the Glad Tidings of "repentance," and the "remission of sins," unto all the Nations of Mankind.

V.

The Resurrection of Jesus was, therefore, a moral and spiritual necessity. Here, as presented in the Gospels, is *its rationale*. He rises to "breathe" on His Apostles the Holy Ghost ;² to send them forth "as the Father had sent" forth Himself, to be "Witnesses" for Him as He had been a Witness for God. And *that* they can only do—*that* they can only be—when they behold

¹ Luke xxiv. 46.

² John xx. 22.

Him as seated at the Right Hand of God, and hear Him proclaiming as from the Throne of the Universe, "All Authority hath been given unto Me in Heaven and on Earth : Go ye *therefore* !" It is the Risen, Reigning, and Ever-living Lord Jesus Christ, that draws men unto Himself, that saves them and saves the World through them, and that shall at last present to the Father a resurrected and glorified Humanity, made like unto His own risen and glorified Self, the God-Man in the Heavenly Places.

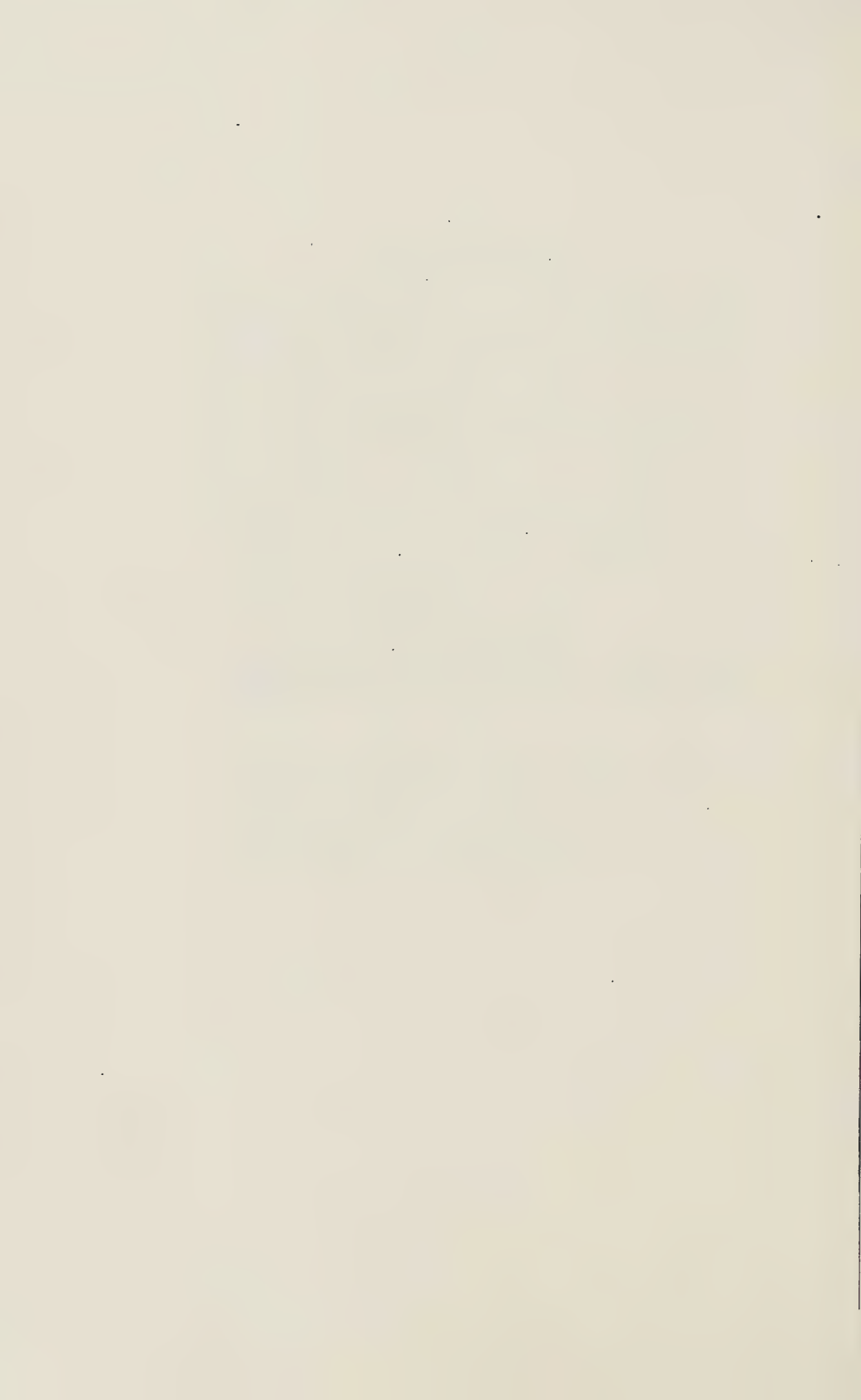
Even Goethe felt the fascination of this truth, and has introduced a Chorus of Angels as singing—

" From the lap of Corruption, lo, Christ hath ascended !
Rejoice, for the fetters that bound you are rended !
Praise Him unceasingly ; Love one another :
Break bread together, like Sister and Brother :
Preach the Glad Tidings to all who will hear you :
So shall the Master be evermore near you !"¹

¹ Martin's Translation.

BOOK SECOND

**THE PLACE AND VALUE OF THE RESURREC-
TION IN THE ACTS**



BOOK SECOND

THE PLACE AND VALUE OF THE RESURRECTION IN THE ACTS

OUR theme being the place and value of the Resurrection of Jesus in the life and teaching of Apostolic Men and Apostolic Days, we turn now with a peculiar interest to the Biblical record of their Acts. Has it ever struck those who doubt or deny the Resurrection of Jesus to consider how much of this Book would remain if that central fact were eliminated? If you blot out from the Acts of the Apostles every paragraph in which the idea or the fact of the risen and living Lord Jesus is either plainly affirmed, or necessarily implied, you would practically abolish this portion of Holy Scripture. Transcendentalists may pretend that they can do without the risen and living Christ at God's right hand, protesting that it is enough to have the Spirit and the

influence of Christ in the heart and His example for the life. But, *not so the Apostles of the Lord!* To them the influence or the Spirit came, not from a dead Teacher lying in His grave, but from One exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, from One who could truly say, "I am the First and the Last and the Living One; and I was dead, and, behold, I am alive for evermore; and I have the Keys of Death and of Hades." ¹

I.

Look, for instance, at what is written even before the Day of Pentecost.

To the Apostles whom He had chosen it is affirmed that "He showed Himself alive after His Passion by many infallible proofs, appearing unto them by the space of forty days, and speaking the things concerning the Kingdom of God." ² Here we have no shadowy or Ghostlike illusion, but a living Personality, their own Master, Teacher, and Saviour restored to them,—seen by them frequently, speaking with them familiarly, and instructing them systematically in the things of the Kingdom of God.

Again, the parting promise to them that they should "receive power" after that the Holy

¹ Rev. i. 17, 18.

² Acts i. 3.

Ghost was come, and that, endued with such power, they should be "Witnesses" unto Him to "the uttermost part of the Earth,"¹ is sharply defined in the election of a successor to Judas, when *this distinctive qualification* is set forth as indispensable—"a Witness with us of His Resurrection."² Whatever else was implied in being Witnesses unto Jesus in the Apostolic Days, this at least was a crowning necessity. No man could be an Apostle who did not then testify,—and no man can to this hour be said to "continue in the Apostle's doctrine and fellowship," who does not now testify that Jesus is risen from the dead and reigning at God's right hand, the throned King of Angels and of Men. And all this was absolutely clear and fixed, while the Apostles were still in a sense only groping their way, waiting for the promise of the Spirit, and before their whole horizon had been flooded with the glorious light of Pentecost.

II.

But turn now to Pentecost and try to understand the place and value of this great fact, the Resurrection of Jesus, on that Day of Wonder and of Power from on high. Or rather, put it this way: Blot out the doctrine that Jesus is

¹ Acts i. 8.² Ibid. i. 22.

risen, and then place yourself amongst the Apostles on that Pentecostal Day, and explain it, account for it, as the achievement of a dead man. The thing is grotesquely impossible!

St. Peter philosophises not at all about the matter, nor pares down the mystery one whit, nor sympathises with the doubters, but unwaveringly points to the risen Lord—"Whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it."¹ There was a moral and spiritual necessity that Death should own itself beaten for once—powerless to hold Jesus!

Further, he argues that Jews, of all men, ought to have been prepared to believe in the Resurrection of the Christ. For their own David had foretold that God "would not leave His soul in Hades," neither would His flesh "see corruption." And, lest they should seek any escape from this conclusion, he insists that the Patriarch himself, who was sleeping in his grave amongst them till this day, being a prophet, and foreseeing this event, "spake of the Resurrection of the Christ."²

Finally, St. Peter bluntly affirms the historical fact of the Resurrection of Jesus, and stakes everything on the issues thereby raised—"This Jesus did God raise up, *whereof we all are*

¹ Acts ii. 24.

² Ibid. ii. 27, 31.

Witnesses." ¹ And thus he makes it for ever impossible to find any other rational explanation of their new Religion, new Life, new Power, than that given by themselves on the Birth Day of the Christian Church, namely, that Jesus, being now "by the right hand of God exalted," had received of the Father "the Promise of the Holy Ghost," and had begun to dispense to Mankind the blessings of the Great Redemption—"He hath poured forth *this* which ye now see and hear." ²

Men of speculation may dabble over this question till the end of Time, but the first explanation of Pentecost remains, and shall remain, the only adequate account of that event, and of all that has since flowed therefrom ;—Christ is risen, Christ is seated at the right hand of God ; Christ is now and ever sending forth His Holy Spirit to finish His Redemptive Mission, to save Mankind, and to bring in the new Heavens and the new Earth. Without this fact that the Lord is risen and reigning, the whole scene would become worthless as the phantasmagoria of confused nightmare. Pentecost itself would as little reward our study, as would the frenzies of hysteria, were there no living Jesus Christ now sitting at the right hand of the Father, ruling and inspiring all.

¹ Acts ii. 32.

² Ibid. ii. 33.

III.

Pentecost has passed. The Church of Christ is publicly started on its historic career. Let us join the Apostles at work, and learn from their own lips what use they made of the fact of the Resurrection of Jesus. What was its place and value in their life and in their teaching?

The Lame Beggar is healed at the Beautiful Gate. Leaping, and walking into the Temple, and praising God, he has drawn together an immense concourse in Solomon's Porch. Peter, full of the Holy Spirit, seizes the occasion to charge the "Men of Israel" with having "Killed the Prince of Life"¹—a magnificent paradox! This, however, not to sink them into despair, but only to proclaim the hope that sprang from the Resurrection of Jesus—"Whom God raised from the dead; whereof we are Witnesses";² and also to proclaim the Glad Tidings that to them "first," God, "having raised up His Servant," had thus "sent Him to bless" them, in "turning away every one"³ of them from their iniquities.

So that, from the very day of Pentecost, and ever since, the Gospel Message of healing, of pardon, of higher and holier life, has been bound up, and remains indissolubly bound up, with the

¹ Acts iii. 15.² Ibid. iii. 15.³ Ibid. iii. 26.

idea and the fact of a risen and exalted Lord and Saviour and King. Without that the life and teaching of the Apostles would become unthinkable !

IV.

We shall now test the Apostles, alike before their enemies and amidst their friends—alike in the presence of Scribe and Pharisee on the one hand, or in the bosom of Christ's Followers and Disciples on the other—and learn from them the place and value of this Gospel fact, the Resurrection of Jesus.

We have the unwitting testimony of "the People, the Priests, the Captain of the Temple, and the Sadducees," that the central characteristic of Apostolic doctrine was that "they proclaimed in Jesus the Resurrection from the dead" ; and that for this reason "they laid hands on them and put them in ward until the morrow."¹ Here we have no concoction of friendly or collusive minds, but the ingenuous declaration of avowed antagonists, that what stood out, even glaringly, in the teaching of the Apostles was that they proclaimed in Jesus and through Jesus the Resurrection from the dead. Jesus had risen, and in Jesus all would be raised !

¹ Acts iv. 1-3.

Next day, in presence of the High Court of the Nation, being demanded in what name they had healed the Lame Beggar, Peter, "filled with the Holy Ghost," unflinchingly declared that it was in the NAME of Jesus Christ of Nazareth"; and then he added with a terrible directness of personal emphasis, "Whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead; even in Him doth this man stand here before you whole." Neither was there Salvation possible through any other, there being no other name under Heaven given amongst men "wherein we must be saved."¹ His is the Saving Name, and His the alone Saving Power—the Name and the Power of the risen, living, exalted, glorified, Redeemer.

Later, on that same day, being let go, we find them in the bosom of the Church,—“they came to their own Company, and reported all that the Chief Priests and the Elders had said unto them.”² Prayer shook the place “wherein they were gathered together.” A second time they were “all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the Word of God with boldness.”³ Now, when St. Luke wishes to illustrate how they thus spake the Word of God, *what feature of their teaching does he single out from all the rest* as at once most distinctive in itself and most fruitful of blessing?

¹ Acts iv. 10, 12.

² Ibid. iv. 23.

³ Ibid. iv. 31.

What but this — that “with great power gave the Apostles their witness of the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.”¹ They had many other things to teach and to enforce ; but this was first of all—as foundation of all other or higher or more spiritual doctrine—that they were the Witnesses for and the Ambassadors of a living, risen, reigning Master and Friend, now throned in the Heavenly Places, “both Lord and Christ.”

Once again, days and months of prosperity and blessing have since elapsed. “Signs and Wonders” have been wrought by the Apostles. And now their enemies, especially the High-Priestly Sadducees, have been lashed into rage by their preaching of the Resurrection. They at least instinctively felt that the Gospel of a risen Christ must be put down, or their own Sect would soon be blotted out. And so the Apostles were fiercely seized and cast into the Common Prison. Delivered thence by the Angel of God, when the Great Council met next day they had to be summoned, not from “Public Ward,” where they had been locked up, but from the “Temple Court,” where they were “standing and teaching the People.”² But, mark what was still and ever the burden of their vindication ? It was a fearless

¹ Acts iv. 33.

² Ibid, v. 12, 17, 18, 25.

and unqualified re-assertion of the Resurrection of Jesus : "the God of our Fathers raised up Jesus, Whom ye slew . . . Him did God exalt with His Right Hand . . . and we are Witnesses of these things ; and so is the Holy Ghost, Whom God hath given to them that obey Him"¹ — to them that obey the risen, living, glorified King of Souls !

Find these Pentecostal and Apostolic men where you will—it matters not—before scoffing Sadducees or amidst adoring Disciples—their witness unto Jesus, whatever else may be involved in it, always carries on its front this distinctive note in letters of gold—"Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour."

V.

Finally, at the close of the first great period of Apostolic History, when the flames of Persecution burst on the Youthful Church, and, within seven years of Pentecost, a determined effort was made to stamp out Christianity in blood, what was the place and what the value of this great fact and doctrine of the Resurrection of Jesus ? What part did the idea and the truth of the risen Lord fulfil in conserving Christianity for the

¹ Acts v. 30-32.

Human Race? For answer we turn to the Martyrdom of Stephen.

The stones are about to crash in upon his brain. The fury of his persecutors has risen beyond all bounds. They cry aloud to drown his words; they stop their ears; they run upon him with murderous rage. What has maddened them? What has lashed them into such a frenzy? What but the words of Stephen—"Behold I see the Heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God."¹ Blasphemy, double and triple blasphemy! Jesus the Crucified, the Nazarene, standing at God's right hand, watching and ruling them, praying for and sustaining His Martyr,—the very idea drove them to madness.

Yet such is the Vision that fills all the fields of Faith, as this glorious portion of the Pentecostal Record is drawing to a close,—a full and unveiled Vision of the Son of Man in the glory of the Father and of the Angels. Stephen beheld that glory, and triumphantly won the Martyr's Crown, in the light and joy of the Master's face beaming down on him out of the opened Heavens. For us, too, that Vision still avails. It breeds in us the Martyr-Spirit. It creates anew "Witnesses" unto Jesus in every age. It sustains faithful

¹ Acts vii. 56.

Souls in every land, and braces them to win the Martyr's Crown. They endure "as seeing Him—who is Invisible !"

VI.

We now come to the mightiest single event—mightiest in view of all its issues—in the history of Christendom, since the rising of Jesus from among the dead ; and we want to know what was the place and value of that cardinal Gospel fact, the Resurrection of Christ, in bringing about this great event and in shaping all its issues. I mean, of course, the *Conversion of Saul of Tarsus*, and his *Transformation into the Great Apostle of the Gentiles*.

Its almost supreme importance, in the early evolution of the Christian Church, is revealed by the circumstance that thrice over it is expressly portrayed in so short a book as the *Acts*,¹ besides being explicitly or by implication pre-supposed in nearly all the other main portions of the New Testament Scriptures. It is perfectly true, as certain Critics insist, that it was the Conversion of Saul which openly launched Christianity on its career as the Religion of Humanity ; but the inference drawn therefrom by some destructive spirits is preposterous in the extreme. They

¹ Acts ix. 5 ; xxii. 8 ; xxvi. 12,

would persuade men that Paul "created" the Christian Faith and the Christ Ideal, as these are known to us. But they fail to explain to us *Who* created Paul the Apostle out of Saul the Persecutor. And, in fact, they never can account for that "New Creature" in any other way than by endorsing Paul's own explanation—"Christ liveth in me."

Glance at each of these narratives, and see their essential bearing on our theme—namely, the place and value of the Resurrection in the life and teaching of the Apostles.

First of all comes the historical record of St. Luke, the Companion of St. Paul, telling us of the sudden shining of "the light out of Heaven" on the road to Damascus, and the Voice of the Lord, in answer to Saul's anguished cry, proclaiming—"I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest."¹ Now, it is the appearing of the Christ Himself to Saul,—the Living, the Risen, the Glorified Jesus,—it is that, and that alone, which can adequately account for not only the Conversion of this persecuting and blinded Pharisee, but also the noble life that flowed out of that Conversion, and the glorious type of character that was built upon it. Granted the facts of the Resurrection of Jesus and the Enthronement of Jesus at God's right hand,

¹ Acts ix. 3, 5.

and the whole event may in some measure be explained and its issues adequately accounted for. Deny these facts, or explain them away, and the whole story is reduced to the rank of a miserable illusion ; nay, we are logically compelled to conclude that the Modern Christian World took its rise out of sunstroke, or some epileptic disease, or pitiful mental craze !

The second narrative of the Conversion comes from the lips of Paul himself. Permitted by the Captain of the Roman Garrison to address the people from the stairs of the Castle of Antonia,¹ he makes his "defence"² to the Brethren and Fathers assembled at Jerusalem. Now, mark the foundation on which the whole of his after-argument is reared. Is it not the solemn declaration that, amidst the great and sudden light on the road to Damascus, there appeared to him and spake to him none other than "Jesus of Nazareth,"³—no longer crucified and dead, but risen, living, and throned in the Heavenly Places ?

Grant that to be a fact, and again all that followed thereon may in some adequate measure be accounted for. But take away that fact, regard Jesus of Nazareth as dead and buried and still sleeping in His grave,—and what remains ? No

¹ Acts xxi. 34, 37.

² Ibid. xxii. 1.

³ Ibid. xxii. 8.

possible adequate account of the change of Saul into Paul, the character and spirit of the Persecutor transformed into the character and spirit of the Apostle ; and no adequate, or even half-adequate explanation of the change of the Heathendom of that Age into the Christendom of all the Centuries since. Rationality,—pure Reason, and sheer reasonableness, — would demand a living and a reigning Jesus to explain the facts of succeeding History, even if the Sacred Scriptures had not recorded the event of the Resurrection at all. He must have risen ; He must have come back ; He must be on the Throne of God ;—else the World of the Christian Era never could have come into being.

Thirdly, at the end, or nearly so, of his public Career, on his way to the Roman trial and imprisonment, St. Paul is brought forth by Festus to “speak for himself,”¹ in presence of King Agrippa and his sister Bernice, “with great pomp”² and royal parade assembled, amidst the Chief Captains and Princes and prominent Citizens of Cæsarea. Now, what again, amidst such memorable surroundings, and on a grandly historic occasion,—what is the crowning “witness” of the Apostle, to which he bears testimony, as it were with his life in his hand, and with the eyes

¹ Acts xxvi. 1.

² Ibid. xxv. 23.

of the whole World fixed upon Him? What doctrine, what fact, dominates all his speech, and lies at the root of his *Apologia*? This, beyond all question, and this supremely—that the risen and living Lord Jesus had appeared to Him saying, “I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest”;¹ and that from that day till this present hour he had continued, by the help of God, “testifying how that the Christ must suffer, and how that He first, by the Resurrection from the dead, should proclaim light. . . .”²

It was this ringing testimony that forced Festus to exclaim, “with a loud voice,”³ that Paul was “beside himself,” that much learning had made him “mad”—a taunt which fired St. Paul to appeal straight to the conscience of King Agrippa, and to draw from him the amazing and the suggestive confession, or sneer, for it may be either, according to the spirit that prompted the words—“With but little persuasion, thou wouldest fain make me a Christian”⁴ (or, “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian!”). In all which there is an argument that approaches a moral demonstration, that to be a Christian was, in the first place, to be a believer and a follower of the risen and glorified Jesus. It is not forcing matters

¹ Acts xxvi. 15.

² Ibid. xxvi. 22, 23.

³ Ibid. xxvi. 24.

⁴ Ibid. xxvi. 28.

beyond strictly legitimate and sober reasoning to affirm that, to St. Paul and to those who accepted his Gospel, the fact of the Resurrection of Jesus from among the dead and His Enthronement in the Heavens was the formal and distinctive article of all Christian faith and life.

VII.

Next after the Conversion of Saul of Tarsus the most epoch-making event in the History of the Christian Church, since Pentecost, was the admission of Gentiles, without Circumcision, to all the privileges and to all the grace of the New Testament Kingdom. Not to St. Paul, however, as we might have anticipated, was the honour and the glory of this transaction entrusted ; but to St. Peter, who opened the door of the Church to the believing Jew from every Nation under Heaven, on the day of Pentecost ; and who, being himself a typical Jew, is now chosen of God and specially instructed to open the door of the Church to the believing Gentile also, in the person of Cornelius of Cæsarea,—and thereby to “every Creature” under Heaven, who receives and believes the Glad Tidings of Salvation through Jesus Christ.

Now what, again, was the place and value of the fact of the Resurrection of Jesus in the evolu-

tion of this next and mightiest event in Christian History? Was that fact forgotten? Was it obscured? Was it kept in the background, as likely to provoke doubt or mockery, rather than faith, in a company of Greeks and Romans? Obscured? It is, implicitly, hurled at them in the first sentence which St. Peter uttered—"The word which He sent unto the Children of Israel, preaching Good Tidings of Peace by Jesus Christ (He is Lord of All)"¹—the parenthesis making it impossible for them even for a moment to imagine that he was talking of some Teacher now dead and gone! *He is Lord of All*, not dead, and done with, by any means, but now living and reigning at God's right hand,—He of whom I speak.

Yea, further, it is explicitly affirmed, as the sole historical basis of all else he would teach regarding this Jesus of Nazareth—"Him God raised up the third day, and gave Him to be made manifest . . . unto Witnesses that were chosen before of God, even to us who did eat and drink with Him, after He rose from the dead."² Nor was this proclaimed by St. Peter as if these Appearings were ghostlike, and unconnected with consequent facts and truths, but rather as the realistic foundation on which rested their authority for offering in

¹ Acts x. 36.

² Ibid. x. 40, 41.

His Name the Remission of Sins "to every one that believeth on Him,"—as well as for delivering the solemn testimony "that this is He which is ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead."¹

Any man who doubts or denies the Resurrection of Jesus, or who, under the guise of spiritualising it, leaves the fact itself an open question, may safely and fairly be challenged to omit the risen Christ from this first offer of the Gospel to the Gentile World, and then tell us what remains? Cut the message short thus—"Jesus of Nazareth, whom God anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the Devil; for God was with Him: and we are Witnesses of all things which He did, both in the Country of the Jews and in Jerusalem; Whom also they slew, hanging Him on a Tree——"² Cut the message short at that death, roll to and leave sealed the Great Stone that guards Him dead asleep, and go forth with that story to quicken and to save a World dead in Sin! No, for ever No,—the thing is unthinkable! And so, St. Peter comes to them with a message from the risen, living, and reigning Christ Jesus, who is "Lord of All," the Holy "Judge" of the Human

¹ Acts x. 42, 43.

² Ibid. x. 38, 39.

Race, and therefore alone capable of being also "the Saviour of the World."

VIII.

Still, some one may legitimately object that this might be only a temporary feature, a passing phase of Apostolic Teaching, forced into undue prominence by circumstances of no vital or abiding significance. Men want to know what was the *permanent and staple testimony of the Apostles*, when they stood before their fellows, spoke for God as inspired prophets, and strove to bring all Mankind into subjection to Jesus Christ. Did they ordinarily insist on this fact, His Resurrection—this mysterious and stumbling event—as necessary to be received and believed by the Converts from Heathendom to Christianity? This is a most interesting and suggestive branch of our inquiry; and we turn again to the *Acts* for an answer. What was the use and wont of the Apostles as there presented to us?

(a) Several years have now passed by since Saul's Conversion. Enthusiasm, if it were fired by fraud, has had time to cool down—time to evaporate, if kindled by mere illusion. Barnabas and Paul are off on a Missionary journey, away from the heats and the sects of Jerusalem; and

we slip into the Synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia, on a certain Sabbath Day, and listen to "the Word of Exhortation."¹

Surely Paul will not go out of his way, so to speak, to drag in a mere stumbling-block, a rock of offence, that is altogether unnecessary to the completeness of his message ! And yet, after the historical *resumé* of God's dealings with them and their fathers, almost his first sentence, as to "the Word of this Salvation,"² is a clean-cut and unflinching declaration regarding Jesus who was taken down from the Tree and laid in a Sepulchre—"But God raised Him from the dead ; and He was seen for many days of them that came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now His Witnesses unto the People : and we bring you Good Tidings of the promise made unto the Fathers, how that God hath fulfilled the same unto our Children, in that He raised up Jesus."³

On this, as historical fact, everything is hinged—"Be it known unto you, therefore, brethren, that through this Man is proclaimed unto you Remission of Sins."⁴ If Christ be not risen, there can be no Glad Tidings of pardon for the penitent !

¹ Acts xiii. 15.

² Ibid. xlii. 26.

³ Ibid. xiii. 30-33.

⁴ Ibid. xiii. 38.

On this rests, also, as the monumental slab on its pedestal of granite rock, the only Hope of Salvation for Mankind—"By Him every one that believeth is justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the Law of Moses." ¹ It was this Gospel, the Gospel of the risen and enthroned Christ, whereby the Disciples, like the Apostles themselves, "were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost." ²

(b) Once more, let us test the use and wont of Apostolic Teaching.

Years have again elapsed. Paul is on his Second Missionary journey, this time accompanied by Silas. They have now crossed over into Europe. They have claimed this Continent for Jesus, and have had the Divine seals to their claim in the Conversion of Lydia and of the Jailer at Philippi. Driven thence, they have passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, and we join them to-day in the City of Thessalonica.

Paul, as his manner was, at once visited the Jewish Synagogue. One Sabbath Day and a second and a third has he spent, reasoning with them patiently out of their own Sacred Scriptures. He was passionately anxious to win them to Christianity. He loved his Kinsmen after the flesh, with an almost transcendental

¹ Acts xiii. 39.

² Acts xiii. 52.

affection. Depend upon it, if the Gospel could be presented in a form not to stagger or enrage them, St. Paul was the man to do it! If the doctrine of the Cross could be so proclaimed as to leave the Resurrection of the Crucified Jesus untouched or open to doubt, this man, willing to become all things if by any means he might gain Souls, would have lightly touched it, or left it altogether on the shelf!

What actually happened? He reasoned three whole Sabbath Days on end, to establish these two points—(1) "That it behoved the Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead"; and (2) "That this Jesus whom he proclaimed to them was the Christ."¹ Others may "open" up the Scriptures, and "allege" regarding them what they please; but to the Holy Apostles their crowning significance is their testimony to Jesus, the Living One Who once was dead. And this is in absolute accord with His Own precept regarding the Scriptures—"These are they which bear witness of ME."² Others may preach a Gospel of so-called Glad Tidings, in which there is no atoning Death and no triumphant Resurrection. Not so the Holy Apostles of Our Lord! Their unfailing plea is for the suffering, risen, and

¹ Acts xvii. 1-3.

² John v. 39.

enthroned Saviour. This is their Good News for every Creature under Heaven.

(c) Further, and most testing of all, so far as the use and wont of the Apostles is concerned, there stands out the example of St. Paul at Athens, when face to face with the wisdom and philosophy of ancient Greece, the intellectual Mistress of the World.

Stirred within by the spectacle of such a City, "full of Idols,"¹ his Spirit drove him on to open disputations in Synagogue and in Market Place. At length he was encountered by the Epicureans and the Stoics, who scornfully described him as a "babbler," and a "setter forth of strange gods."² But the very language in which their mockery was couched has crystallised for us into a single graphic phrase the substance of all his teaching—"He preached *Jesus and the Resurrection*."

The Resurrection! Well did he know, and often enough had he heard in these disputations, that the very term, and still more the idea, of the Resurrection was repugnant and even offensive to these philosophers of Greece. Does he water it down? Does he try to explain it away? On the contrary, when they "took hold of him and brought him unto the Areopagus,"³ inviting him

¹ Acts xvii. 16.

² Ibid. xvii. 18.

³ Ibid. xvii. 19.

to set forth the fundamental doctrines of Christianity before the representatives of the most intellectual Nation on Earth—how does he proceed? He weaves one of the finest Orations around the Name and the Claims of Jesus ever produced by a human brain,—charming them with a magnificent conception of the One Living God, “the Lord of Heaven and Earth,” who giveth, to all, “life and breath and all things,”¹—charming them with a quotation from one of their own Poets to enforce the truth that we are all “the Offspring of God,” who hath made of one blood all Nations of men,—but charming them thus only to prepare the way for crashing in with the staggering and unflinching Gospel, that God hath ordained the Man Christ Jesus “to judge the World in righteousness”; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, “in that He hath raised Him from the Dead!”²

That word imperilled everything, and Paul knew that it would. No sooner had the phrase about the Resurrection of Jesus leapt from his lips, than he was silenced by the “mockery” of some, and by the courteous though sarcastic dismissal of others, who pretended that they would “hear him again!” He had counted the cost. Christianity stood face to face with Philosophy and Literature

¹ Acts xvii. 24, 25.

² Ibid. xvii. 31.

and Science on Mars Hill—and, oh ! how much was at stake ! But St. Paul would not win even Athens by a maimed Gospel or a falsified Testimony. They must receive Jesus *and the Resurrection*, or they must part with St. Paul. He lost the Capital of Greece, rather than give up or even hide the Resurrection of Jesus.

IX.

Finally, there were several occasions, as presented to us in the Book of the *Acts*, when St. Paul was virtually or actually on trial for his life, when the hiding or obscuring of this hateful doctrine about the Resurrection of the Crucified One would have turned the tide in his favour. And it becomes intensely interesting and instructive to inquire how, in these perilous times, he acted, and whether he at all trimmed his Resurrection Gospel to catch the popular breeze ?

Let us pass these scenes briefly in review and drink in their lesson.

(a) Rescued from the frenzied hatred of the Jews—"as they cried out, and threw off their garments, and cast dust into the air"¹—Captain Lysias placed him before the Council on the morrow that he might know for certain where-

¹ Acts xxii. 23.

fore Paul was accused. Insulted by the High Priest, Ananias, the Apostle retorted upon him with great spirit, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall! Sittest thou to judge me according to the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?"¹ And another uproar was swiftly brewing, when Paul, in order to force things to an issue, dissolved the unholy pact of Sadducee and Pharisee with the searching cry, "I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; touching the hope and resurrection of the Dead, I am called in question!"²

He herein used an absolutely legitimate and righteous weapon of defence and of offence. It split these hypocritical persecutors into raging and devouring Sects. But it also emphasised, even at the risk of life itself, the one fact on which his entire Gospel hinged—the *Hope and Resurrection of the Dead*. The wild spirit of partisanship thereon burst all bounds. Discussion raged betwixt Pharisee and Sadducee, even the learned Scribes standing up and "striving," their voices mingling in "the great dissension," and the whole multitude becoming so frantically divided that the Chief Captain, "fearing lest Paul should be torn in pieces by them,"³ sent his Soldiers to seize him by force and bring him

¹ Acts xxiii. 3.

² Ibid. xxiii. 6.

³ Ibid. xxiii. 7-10.

safely into the Castle. Such was the battle-cry of the Great Apostle when thus brought to bay. He proclaimed through Jesus the Hope and Resurrection of the Dead ; and the Lord Himself owned that deed and blessed him in it—"For the night following, the Lord stood by him and said, Be of good cheer ! For as thou hast testified concerning Me at Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome."¹

(b) At length, rescued by Lysias, through the intervention of Paul's nephew, from the Forty Assassins who had bound themselves together by a curse and a vow "that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul,"² he stands next at the Judgment Bar of Felix, Governor at Cæsarea, and once more his very life is staked on the defence he may choose to make.

The hired Orator Tertullus, with Ananias and the Elders egging him on, has denounced Paul as "a pestilent fellow, a mover of insurrections amongst all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the Sect of the Nazarenes."³ Whereon the Apostle, being beckoned to by the Governor to speak, answers "cheerfully" for himself, setting forth plainly the one and only ultimate cause of quarrel betwixt his accusers

¹ Acts xxiii. 11.

² Ibid. xxiii. 12.

³ Ibid. xxiv. 5.

and himself—no “disputing,” no “stirring up” of the people, either in the Synagogue or in the City ; not one of the things whereof they have now accused him, but which they cannot prove. No ! but simply and exclusively this : “ I confess unto thee, that after the Way which they call a Sect, so serve I the God of our Fathers, believing all things which are according to the Law, and which are written in the Prophets ; having hope towards God, which these also themselves look for, that there shall be a Resurrection both of the Just and Unjust.”¹ And then, gathering in intensity as he hurled back their slanderous lies, the Apostle turned upon his accusers and challenged them to produce a single witness to prove any evil against him, “except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the Resurrection of the Dead I am called in question before you this day.”² At bottom, that plea covered everything in the case.

Felix, under various insincere pretences, left Paul still in prison at the close of two full years, though he gave orders to the Centurion that kept him in charge “that he should have indulgence ; and not to forbid any of his friends to minister unto him.”³ It may be that God thrust

¹ Acts xxiv. 14.

² Ibid. xxiv. 21.

³ Ibid. xxiv. 23.

on his fervid spirit these years of Rest in order that, according to tradition, the Gospel of St. Luke might be written largely to his dictation, and so St. Paul's Message to Mankind be imperishably perpetuated. I know not; but this we shall immediately see—that no imprisonment, no chain, no weary delay of justice could impair his faith in the Resurrection of the Dead, or make his voice ring less eloquently as he proclaimed "Jesus is risen! Jesus is on the Throne of God!"

(c) Porcius Festus, having succeeded Felix, paid a visit to Jerusalem "after three days," anxious at once to be on friendly terms with the rulers there. They, still drunk with hate, tried to persuade him to send Paul up for trial, "laying wait to kill him on the way," having fully adopted the murder-plot as their own. Baffled in this, they were invited at the end of "ten days" to go down with the Governor himself to Cæsarea and to accuse "the Man" there!¹

Festus, "on the morrow"—that is, the very next day after his return—solemnly ascended the Judgment Seat, commanded Paul to be brought in, and set him face to face with his accusers. Again they hurled against him "many

¹ Acts xxv. 1, 5.

and grievous charges, which they could not prove." And again Paul fearlessly vindicated himself, refusing to be handed over to them at Jerusalem to be murdered, even at the suggestion of the Procurator, and at last exercising his indefeasible right of Roman Citizenship, "I am standing before Cæsar's Judgment Seat, where I ought to be judged ; to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou thyself also very well knowest. If, then, I am a wrongdoer, and have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die ; but if none of these things is true whereof these accuse me, no man can give me up unto them. I appeal unto Cæsar !" ¹

But what again was the gist of Paul's testimony ? What was the Citadel of the Faith in which he entrenched himself ? We learn it most explicitly from the words of Festus himself, when after "certain days," the King Agrippa and his Sister Bernice came to salute him and he asked their advice concerning this singular Prisoner, of whom he had "no certain thing" to write unto Cæsar. But in describing the accusations of his enemies, though with a touch of fine Roman scorn, he yet preserves for us, unwittingly, the most unquestionable testimony as to what was the central and outstanding idea in Apostolic teaching—"Con-

¹ Acts xxv. 8-11.

cerning whom, when the Accusers stood up, they brought no charge of such evil things as I supposed, but had certain questions against him of their own Religion, and of One, Jesus, Who was dead, *Whom Paul affirmed to be alive.*"¹

There, clear and round and memorable, as it struck the brain of that Roman Judge, flashes forth the one supreme and distinctive article of the Gospel as then presented to the World. One Jesus, Who was dead, but Whom Paul affirmed to be *alive*; and all Christians triumphantly affirm the same! Where that is not proclaimed and affirmed to the end of time the Gospel is not preached.

(d) Paul's defence, delivered in presence of King Agrippa, and Bernice, and Festus, and the Captains of the Army, and all the mighty men of Cæsarea, has already arrested us for another reason, and has won alike from the Procurator and the King the unwavering sentence—"This man doeth nothing worthy of death or bonds;" and Agrippa emphatically added—"This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Cæsar."² But what we now want to know is this—"Did his teaching about the Resurrection colour that *Apologia*? Did he

¹ Acts xxv. 18, 19.

² Acts xxvi. 31-32.

on that occasion deliver any testimony about the Rising of the Christ from among the Dead ?

Passing by the narrative of his own Conversion, already commented on, what remains in this world-famous defence ? An opening sentence of compliment to the King—a single glance at his own manner of life from his youth as a Pharisee—and then, without any hesitation, without beating about the bush to prepare the way, *the instant perilling of his whole case, and of life itself*, on his testimony regarding the Resurrection—"I stand here to be judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our Fathers,"—with the swiftly following question to show that that Hope meant to Him at least a Messiah who should suffer and rise again—"Why is it judged incredible with you, if God doth raise the Dead ?" ¹ To which all-dominating conception his mind again swings back, after the story of his Conversion has been told, and he wishes to describe, with a single stroke, *the central aim of his life* from that day till the present hour—"Having, therefore, obtained the help that is from God, I stand unto this day testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the Prophets and Moses did say should come ; how that the Christ must suffer, and how that He first, by the Resur-

¹ Acts xxvi. 6-8.

rection of the Dead, should proclaim light both to the People and to the Gentiles."¹ Strike out the Resurrection, the fact and the idea of the Rising again from the Dead, and this whole "defence" falls to pieces. The *Apologia* of St. Paul is absolutely unthinkable without a risen, reigning, and triumphant Jesus, alive and on the Throne of the Universe.

X.

Not in vain, surely,—not without quickening of Faith and kindling of Love,—have we traced the fact of the Resurrection of Jesus through every page in the Book of the *Acts*; and set it in its primal place as a factor of influence in the life and teaching of Apostolic men and Apostolic days. It is thereby placed beyond all rational question that the Apostles and all the Early Christians looked up to the Lord Jesus as then at the Right Hand of God in the Heavenly World, as the Living Lord of Angels and of Men, and as the ordained and anointed Judge of the Quick and the Dead.

To think of Jesus otherwise is to cease to be Christians. Men who regard the Prophet of Nazareth as still sleeping in His Grave may

¹ Acts xxvi. 22-23.

crown His memory with what crowns they please, and may adorn His Sepulchre with all the jewels of Earthly praise ; but they have yet to learn the very first letter in the Alphabet of Christianity ; and that is—that Eternal Life is a gift from the Throne and not from the Tomb, not from a buried Master but from a crowned and throned King !

BOOK THIRD

**THE PLACE AND VALUE OF THE RESUR-
RECTION IN THE EARLIER EPISTLES OF
ST. PAUL**



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GREAT as is the importance of the records in the *Acts*, great as is the value of the narratives in the *Gospels*, greater still in the field of Christian Evidences is the testimony of the *Earlier Epistles*, as to the place and value of the Resurrection in the teaching of Apostolic men and in the life of Apostolic days. Men may, with some show of argument, contend that the Book of the *Acts* was put into its present shape, not by Apostles or their Companions, but by a generation or even two generations later than the events described—may argue this, though they fail to prove it. Men may, with some claim to literary and critical judgment, try to establish the proposition,—that the Four Gospels, as we have them, belong to the Second Century of Christianity rather than

the First—may try to prove this, though they never succeed. But no man, worthy of being listened to, will question,—*that the Earlier Epistles belong to the very generation which saw Jesus put to death*;—that they were written and scattered abroad throughout the then known World during the lifetime of multitudes of the Contemporaries of Jesus and His Apostles;—and that, in sheer historical fact, they are the genuine and authentic productions of Paul and his Contemporaries, written and sent forth within from twenty to thirty years of the Crucifixion of Christ.

In pursuance of our theme—the place and value of the Resurrection in the life and teaching of Apostolic times—we turn now, therefore, with an interest that kindles as we advance, to the Earlier Epistles of the New Testament. We ask—*What, on this subject, was the faith of the man, or men, who wrote these Letters?* And, in answering that question, we shall inevitably answer this other, which goes deeper yet—*What was the faith of the Christian People to whom these Letters were addressed?* And what had been the faith of every follower of Christ, as indicated by these Epistles, not only from the date of their being written, but back without the break of a single day to that primal hour when, first at

Jerusalem, and thereafter in City after City, two or three gathered together in the Name of Jesus ? So far as the merely logical setting of our problem is concerned, we are now about to scale and enter the very Citadel of the Argument.

I.

By the suffrage of all who know anything of these subjects, *The First Epistle to the Thessalonians* was written by St. Paul ; and its date, fixable within a period of twelve months or so, ranks it without any question as the Oldest, that is, the *Earliest*, of all the Writings that constitute our New Testament. Now, if we be men however keenly yet honestly searching for fact and truth, the placing of such a document in our hands, so attested, will inflame us with ardour and delight. When such a Witness is called in and sworn, every man in the Jury is at once alert and intense !

We shall now set forth, under three memorable heads, this weighty evidence.

(a) He is praising the Thessalonian Converts, to whom His Gospel had come, "not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance," and who had been "an ensample to all that believe in Macedonia and

in Achaia.”¹ He pauses, however, to cheer them by a still more delicately delivered praise than any of his ; for why should he “speak anything” on the subject at all, since “in every place” their faith to God-ward is “gone forth,” and friends the world over are eager to tell the story of Paul’s “manner of entering in” amongst the souls won for God and His Son at Thessalonica.²

What then, we ask, did their Conversion imply ? On what was it based, and by what was it fed and sustained ? And the Apostle’s words ring clear in reply—“Ye turned unto God from Idols, to serve a living and true God and to wait for His Son from Heaven——”³ Surely he might pause there ? Is that not enough ? Conversion to the true God, waiting for the Coming of Jesus again—what more can be needed ? Why burden the faith of young Converts from Paganism with mysteries and staggering doctrines, if they can possibly be dispensed with ? Let them rest on what they have received, and lead a godly life !

So thought not, felt not, the Great Apostle. On the contrary, he proceeds to close the sentence about Conversion and the Glorious Hope with a blunt and unqualified and unapologised-for declaration of the fact of the Resurrection—“to wait for His Son from Heaven, Whom He raised

¹ 1 Thess. i. 5, 7.

² 1 Ibid. i. 8, 9.

³ 1 Ibid. i. 9.

from the dead, even Jesus, which delivereth us from the Wrath to come." ¹ It is beautiful to hear about "Conversion from Idols,"—beautiful to talk about "Waiting for His Son from Heaven"; but all that, the Apostle implies, is but a web of gossamer threads, to be blown out of existence by a breath, unless it be built on the truth that Jesus has risen, that Jesus reigns, and that Jesus cometh again to judge the quick and the dead. The man who wrote this letter, and the men to whom he wrote, equally and absolutely grounded all their Faith and all their Hope on the fact of the Resurrection of Jesus.

(b) Again, a great sorrow had seized some of those affectionate and eager souls at Thessalonica—a sorrow for the blessed Dead that had fallen asleep in Jesus, lest perchance they should miss something by having passed away in death before the Return of the Lord from the Heavens. A passionate longing for His Coming again now possessed the Thessalonian Christians; and a tender and holy regret was breathed over those who were being taken away before the breaking of the Dawn! St. Paul, without rebuking their eager longing for His Glorious Appearing—a thing in itself Apostolic and Divine (though he afterwards severely rebuked their unwarranted

¹ 1 Thess. i. 10.

practical misapplications of such a faith)—set himself in this Epistle to blot out all grounds for their regret over those who were falling asleep in death. And how does he proceed to accomplish this? By the assurance that they shall rise again—yea, that the dead in Christ shall rise “first—”¹ before the living are transfigured, and that God Himself will lead them forth to share the joy and the glory of their returning Saviour.

Yes, all that is noble and beautiful and comforting; but the Grave is deep and still, and the bands of Death are strong, and how do we know that we shall ever see them again? On one ground, and only one, can you know and be comforted. There is a gracious condition, a Divine “If,” a glorious term of grace, against which the Gates of Hell never shall prevail—“If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.”² He is coming. He shall bring His dead with Him. And the guarantee, the pledge, the only certainty about it all is the unshaken and unshakable faith that Jesus Himself rose again! Blot out that fact, and you obliterate the Consolations offered by God Himself to them that mourn for those who have fallen asleep in Jesus.

(c) Lastly, in this Epistle, the Apostle, speaking

¹ 1 Thess. iv. 16.

² 1 Ibid. iv. 14.

of "times and seasons," centres all interest on the Lord's Coming, on the absolute and glorious certainty of the *fact*, yet the absolute and utter uncertainty of the *date*—"the Day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night"—a truth which they themselves already "knew perfectly";¹ and he makes that his supreme plea for their living as "sons of light, and sons of the day," putting on "the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of Salvation."² But, lest any one should falter or faint in the pursuance of that Hope, he protests that God hath "appointed us not unto Wrath, but unto the obtaining of Salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ"; and he adds, as the Divine Assurance that that Holy Purpose shall never be baffled—"Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him."³

Live together with Him! How so, if Jesus be still sleeping in His Grave? What meaning could such words have to the followers of a dead and unresurrected Christ? His risen Life, His Enthronement with God, are not here explicitly affirmed; but all else that is affirmed depends absolutely and solely on these things being facts, being true. So much so, that if the one be proclaimed, the other must be taken for granted,

¹ 1 Thess. v. 2.² 1 Ibid. v. 5, 8.³ 1 Ibid. v. 9, 10.

else the whole argument is pointless, is absurd. The "Hope" of Salvation? Yes, for God hath appointed us thereto; and whether we "watch" and toil here below for His Coming, or "sleep" in faith and hope awaiting the Glorious Appearing, we shall yet "live together with Him." We shall live with the Living One, Who once was dead, and, behold, He is now Alive for evermore!

II.

Of as nearly as possible the very same date, and more incontestably, if that were possible, the actual production of St. Paul, shines forth next on our gaze—*The Epistle to the Galatians*. We turn now to study it in relation to our special theme—the place and value of the Resurrection in the Life and Teaching of Apostolic Men and Apostolic Days.

(a) A very large portion of this most graphic and intensely interesting Letter is a personal vindication of Paul's own right to be regarded as an Apostle at all—hurled against those Judaizers who had gone in amongst the volatile Highlanders of Galatia, and had cruelly tried to "remove" them from him that had called them in the Grace of Christ, "unto a different Gospel," which yet was not another, but a "perversion" of the Gospel of Christ.¹

¹ Gal. i. 6, 7.

Of the Six Chapters, the first two deal with questions that impugn St. Paul's personal honour as a Witness for Christ. Almost every verse throbs with a manly indignation against those who slighted his Apostleship, or threw doubts on his claim to a supernatural Commission from Jesus Himself : " I make known to you, Brethren, as touching the Gospel which was preached by me, that it is not after Man ; for neither did I receive it from Man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through Revelation of Jesus Christ." ¹

This introduces a brilliant and slashing historical demonstration of these two propositions—(1) that his Apostleship was derived from no Man, but from the Lord Jesus alone ; and (2) that his Gospel Message was learned from no Man, but from the Lord Jesus Himself. In which, amongst other memorable things, there pass in review his "manner of life in time past in the Jews' Religion,"—the "good pleasure of God" in revealing His Son within him,—the going away into Arabia, instead of going up to Jerusalem, or "conferring with flesh and blood,"—then, "after three years," his going up "to visit Cephas" and tarrying with him fifteen days,—and then, "fourteen years" after that again, his attending the

¹ Gal. i. 11, 12.

Council at Jerusalem, along with Barnabas and Titus, where "privately" he laid "before them who were of repute" the Gospel which he preached among the Gentiles, lest by any means he "should be running, or had run, in vain."¹ He marks, however, with a ringing emphasis, his personal refusal "to give place in the way of subjection," to the false brethren "privily brought in," to spy out the liberty which he had in Christ Jesus, that they might bring him and his Converts "into bondage"—a thing he would never submit to, "No! not for one hour!"² Then comes his grateful acknowledgement that his Apostleship was recognised by James and Cephas and John, who "were reputed to be pillars," and gave to him and to Barnabas "the right hands of fellowship;" and, finally, the page pulsates with a description of the scene of his "resisting Peter to the face" at Antioch, because he "stood condemned" as a dissembler, inasmuch as, after having eaten with the Gentiles "before that certain came from James, he drew back and separated himself,"³ fearing them that were of the Circumcision. By all which St. Paul proves to the hilt—proves ten times over—his absolute independence, as an Apostle, of any mere human

¹ Gal. i. 13, 15, 16, 18; ii. 1, 2, 3.

² Ibid. ii. 4, 5.

³ Ibid. ii. 9, 11, 12.

authority ; and makes almost superfluous his own solemn asseveration—" Now, touching the things which I write unto you, behold, before God I lie not ! " ¹

(b) It is a most thrilling and pathetic portion of Holy Scripture. But what relation can it bear to our present theme ? Wherein does the fact of the Resurrection of Jesus impinge on this high argument, and personal *Apologia* ? Need we point out that the whole contention falls dishonoured into the dust, if Jesus be not Alive, if Jesus did not actually appear out of the Heavens to commission and endow this Apostle as " one born out of due time ? "

Ah ! let us not bungle this impassioned dialectic by our imperfect paraphrasing ! Take it, rather, hot and throbbing and soul-kindling, as it bursts on us in the very first verse of his Epistle—" Paul, an Apostle, not from Men, neither through Man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father " ²— Why does he not halt there ? Is not that enough ? Why drag in any other idea, unless it were absolutely vital and eternally indisputable, in addition to this already transcendent claim ? But he must come out with it. To him it is vital and indispensable. It is in fact the basis of everything else in his teaching and his

¹ Gal. i. 20.

² Ibid. i. 1.

Apostolic claims. Therefore he adds to the phrase "by Jesus Christ and God the Father" the all-dominating words—"Who raised Him from the dead."¹ It is not such a Jesus as any one or every one may choose to paint or to create for himself out of his own brain, stript of that which is "foolishness" to the philosopher and an "offence" to the Pharisee. No! It is the Jesus of History; He Who rose from the Dead; He Who called and separated Saul the persecutor to become Paul the Apostle; He, of Whom every Christian since can say, as Paul said, gazing up at Him on His Throne as Prince and Saviour—"I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live: and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me; and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself up for me."²

Gave Himself up for me, and now lives in Heaven to bring me to share His glory! If St. Paul did not believe that, and know it to be true, his whole life was a miserable fraud or an insane illusion. And you are then faced with another, and an absolutely unsolvable problem—How such a character and career as that of the Great Apostle could grow out of lies and delusions?

He was the Ambassador of Jesus the King,

¹ Gal. i. 1.

² Ibid. ii. 20.

He was the Servant of a Divine Master, seated in the Heavenly Places. He was the Apostle, sent forth unto the Gentiles, from the living Lord in Glory. If Jesus of Nazareth had not been then exalted to the Throne of God, Saul of Tarsus never could by any conceivable possibility have become what he actually did become in the history of Christendom.

III.

Still moving amongst the earlier Documents of Christianity we come to the greatest of all the Epistles, if not the greatest intellectual achievement of the Christian Mind—*The Epistle to the Romans*.

By an unerring spiritual instinct it is ranked foremost of all, though certainly not the earliest in date—the Conscience of Christendom at once realising that, logically considered, the Church of Christ must stand or fall at the bar of Reason by the arguments herein contained. Now, with us it is a vital question, in view of the problem we seek to solve—Whether and how far the Resurrection of Jesus has any place in the building up of this lofty theme? We are most anxious to know whether the mightiest single Intellect that has ever been consecrated to the Cause of Christ,—when trying to command the Universal and

Divine Religion to the Imperial Mistress of the World,—found it necessary to insist upon the Resurrection of Jesus ; or whether, on the other hand, he found any way of presenting the Claims of Christ without thrusting into the foreground that “Offence of the Cross”—the alleged Rising again of Jesus from among the Dead ?

With a desire to answer these questions, we shall briefly analyse and review the relevant portions of this great Epistle.

(a) In the opening sentence Paul had occasion to speak of himself as “separated unto the Gospel of God, which He promised afore by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son . . . even Jesus Christ our Lord”¹; and this, according to his wont, launches him away on an ocean of glorious ideas about the Saviour, of which these two specially concern us at present : (1) That “He was born of the Seed of David, according to the Flesh” ; and (2) that “He was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the Resurrection of the Dead.”²

So, then, we have not had far to travel to learn the essential importance of the Resurrection of Jesus. It is here reasoned upon as the manifestation of His true Divinity ; the visible demonstra-

¹ Rom. i. 1, 3, 5.

² Ibid. i. 3, 4.

tion to Angels, to Men, and to Demons, that Jesus is the very Son of God He claimed to be. It was true to Paul, it remains true to us, that the Deity of Jesus cannot be maintained, if you doubt or deny His Resurrection from the dead. The Prayers to Jesus as God die upon our lips if we may not sing whole-heartedly our Easter Hymn—"He is not here ! He is risen ! Come, see the place where the Lord lay !" The Empty Tomb must first be gazed into with awestruck vision, before your Soul can see the Son of Man on the Throne of God.

No Resurrection of Jesus would consequently mean no Deity of Jesus.

(b) This, however, to a certain type of mind, will sound all too transcendental ; and the cry is for something more practical, setting forth the actual effects of the Resurrection of Jesus on our faith and life as Christians.

Here, then, without delay, we have it, in that grand formative and regulative Chapter about the faith of Abraham being "reckoned for righteousness." ¹ The reasoning is piled high and ever higher, till at length it is crowned with the glorious declaration that Abraham "staggered not" at the promise—"he wavered not through unbelief, but waxed strong through faith, giving glory to God ;

¹ Rom. iv. 5.

and being fully assured that what He had promised He was able also to perform" ; even to the extent of being able to raise up a Son to him as it were from the dead, for he "considered" both Sarah and himself to be in that respect "now as good as dead." ¹

But what has this to do with our theme ? Much every way ; but chiefly this,—that such faith as Abraham herein exercised is the perfect prototype and exact parallel of Saving Faith now and until the end of the World ; namely, the faith which believes that God can bring up Life out of Death ; so that to us also faith is reckoned for righteousness, "who believe on Him that raised Jesus our Lord from the dead ;"—the same Jesus Who was "delivered up for our trespasses" to atone for them, and Who was "raised up for our justification," ² that is, in order to accomplish it and perfect it from God's right hand.

Believe on Him that raised up Jesus from the dead—and you are heirs of Abraham's faith and of Abraham's justification before God, who staggered not at the promise. Salvation by Grace and through Faith leads us close to the empty Sepulchre ; and then fixes our gaze upon the Living One Who was dead and is alive for evermore.

¹ Rom. iv. 20, 21, 19.

² Ibid. iv. 24, 25.

No Resurrection of Jesus would, alas, mean no Justification by Faith.

(c) We are now invited to consider the wondrous fruits of this Justification by Faith,—“Peace with God ; access into this grace ; hope of glory ; rejoicing in tribulations ; and the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.”¹ But this brings the Apostle to a pause, till he has poured out his soul concerning that unspeakable Love of God, inasmuch as “while we were yet weak, in due season Christ died for the ungodly” ;² and further, inasmuch as “God commendeth His own love towards us, in that, while we were yet Sinners, Christ died for us.”³

There, however, he cannot rest. Calvary only suggests to him something more glorious than itself. The thought of dying for us leads on to the thought of rising again for us from the Dead. Atonement on the Cross can only be completed by Intercession in the Heavens. And so the argument is crowned in this way—“Much more, then, being now justified by His blood, shall we be saved from the Wrath of God through Him ; for if, while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the Death of His Son, much

¹ Rom. v. 1, 5.

² Ibid. v. 6.

³ Ibid. v. 8.

more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by His Life."¹

Saved by His Life—"Because I live, ye shall live also"! *Saved by His Life*—"Because He ever liveth to make intercession for us"! The Life of the Risen and Reigning Jesus is the fountain and the pledge of Life Eternal in all believing Souls.

No Resurrection of Jesus would therefore mean no Eternal Life for Man.

(d) But a shadow immediately crosses the Believer's path, and the Apostle sets himself to scatter it by pouring forth beams of Heavenly light. This Righteousness that comes by Faith—does it make light of Sin? Shall we continue in Sin that Grace may abound? And his answer to this immoral suggestion is one that could be written only by a believer in the Resurrection of Jesus, and one that could be appreciated only by men who followed a risen and living Lord.

Thus, he tells them that like as Christ died for our sins, even so in Christ we "died to sin"; and like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, even so we also should rise up in Him and "walk in newness of life."² He urges them to understand that "dying with Christ" implies and necessitates "living with Christ"; and that, as "the death that He

¹ Rom. v. 9, 10.

² Ibid. vi. 2, 4.

died, He died unto sin once ; but the life that He liveth He liveth unto God " ;—even so they are to reckon themselves " to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Jesus Christ." ¹

Therefore, Salvation by Grace, Justification by Faith, apart from merit of ours, only lifts up the saved and justified Soul to a higher plane of loving and grateful Obedience ; and there, as ransomed by the Blood of the Lamb, the Christian yields up his members no longer " unto sin, as instruments (weapons) of unrighteousness " ; but yields up himself as one " alive from the dead," and his members " as instruments of righteousness unto God." ² *Dead unto Sin,—Alive unto Righteousness*,—these are the moral effects, the spiritual consequences of the Gospel of the Grace of God.

Therefore, yet again, no Resurrection of Jesus would mean no New Obedience unto God possible for Man.

(e) Striking deeper yet into the fountains of life and action, the Apostle proclaims that the union of the Soul by faith and love to the living Lord Jesus is the marriage of the Human Spirit to its Heavenly Bridegroom, and is destined to bring forth good fruits to the praise and glory of God.

This thought he elaborates in his own charac-

¹ Rom. vi. 8, 10.

² Ibid. vi. 13.

teristic style. The Soul of Man had, for first Husband, the Law of God. But she dies in Christ's dying, and so is "free from the Law";—that first Husband hath legally no more claim or dominion over her, and she is free to be married to another Husband, the risen and living Lord, her Heavenly Bridegroom."¹

Wherefore, the very source and fountain of a godly life, a life full of good fruits unto God, is reached in and through the Resurrection of Jesus. We are "made dead to the Law through the body of Christ"—we die to all former lords or lovers of the Soul—in order that we "should be joined to Another, even to Him Who was raised from the dead, that we might bring forth fruit unto God."² That is the sole pathway that leads to a Christlike life. Thence come all good deeds to the glory of God, and for the true welfare of Men.

No Resurrection of Jesus would, consequently, mean no Heavenly Bridegroom for the Human Soul.

(f) Proceeding still further to expound the nature of the glorious deliverance achieved for the Soul of Man by Jesus Christ, through the action of "the law of the Spirit of Life" freeing us from "the law of Sin and of Death,"³ the Apostle is led on to show that this ensures the Redemption

¹ Rom. vii. 1, 3.

² Ibid. vii. 4.

³ Ibid. viii. 2.

of the Body, not less truly than the Salvation of the Soul. For, though "the Body is dead because of Sin," yet the Spirit is Life because of Righteousness."¹

Now, the seal of all this is found in the Resurrection of Jesus. The philosophy of the Great Redemption is this—"He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall quicken also your mortal bodies through His Spirit that dwelleth in you."² Your Bodies are the "members" of Christ. He will not leave them in death, while He their "Head" lives in Glory. Your Bodies are the "Temples" of the Holy Ghost. He will raise and rebuild the Fane which Death seemed to shatter, and so mould it that it shall be, at last and for ever, "the Habitation of God." The guarantee, the pledge, the exemplar of the rising again of our mortal Bodies in Glory and Immortality is the fact that Jesus has risen—risen in a glorified Human Form—risen by the power of the same Holy Spirit that dwelleth in us, the Spirit of God that shall quicken also our mortal Bodies." Christ was the first to rise. We too, therefore, shall be raised.

No Resurrection of Jesus would mean, alas, no Quickening of our mortal Bodies from out the Sleep of Death.

¹ Rom. viii. 10.

² Ibid. viii. 11.

(g) Passing beyond even the Resurrection of our bodies by the quickening power of the Spirit, the Apostle, in a flight of sublime eloquence, pictures the eternal blessedness and triumph of the Redeemed, in answer to rapidly-fired questions, such as these: "If God be for us, who can be against us? . . . Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? . . . Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"¹

And as he leaps from peak to peak amongst these Mountains of God, setting forth conceptions, which strain the power of language to express them, regarding "the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord,"²—what place does he give, if any, to the Resurrection of Jesus? Has that fact any spiritual value at all? Is it a vital element amidst all these glories and triumphs? Or, having attained such spiritual heights, can the Resurrection be dispensed with, and ignored? Behold, right in the very heart of this lofty strain, when the Apostle has told us that it is God that justifieth, and has asked, "Who is he that shall condemn?"³; and when he is preparing the way for thrusting home the central arrow from his quiver, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" he preludes his full answer

¹ Rom. viii. 31, 33, 35.

² Ibid. viii. 39.

³ Rom. viii. 34.

with this solemn note, "It is Christ Jesus that died"—died for us, died to save us, died and will not condemn! Now to many, of a bastard Evangelical School, that would have been enough to say. They get men on their knees before the Cross, and they show Jesus *only* as the Crucified One, never raising their eyes to the Throne of the Glorified Redeemer. Far different was the Evangel of St. Paul. Glorifying, as he triumphantly did, in the Cross and the Death of Jesus, there was something in which he gloried still more, and that was the Resurrection of Jesus from the Dead, and His present Heavenly Life beyond the Veil. And so he cannot pen the words, "It is Christ that died," without rushing on to make this fervent addition, "*Yea rather, that was raised from the Dead*, Who is at the Right Hand of God, Who also maketh intercession for us." ¹

That is the Jesus Who will not condemn ransomed Souls; the Jesus from Whom nothing on Earth or in Hades can separate us! *Yea rather, that is risen again.* Dwell on His Atoning Death as constantly and as lovingly as you may. Think of His High-Priestly Intercession as devoutly and adoringly as you please. But the Key-Stone of the Arch which binds them together,

¹ Rom. viii. 34.

and over which we climb to the bosom of God, is found in this "Yea rather" which glories in His Resurrection from the Dead. With His foot planted on the stone that was rolled away from the empty Sepulchre, Jesus vaults into His Throne in the Heavens. Our eyes of Faith and Love follow Him thither; and we know that we shall share His triumph, and become "more than conquerors" ¹ over Death and the Grave, through Him that loved us.

No Resurrection of Jesus would consequently mean for us no High Priest upon His Throne in the Heavens. .

(h) The great theme of the Rejection of Israel through Unbelief, and the coming Restoration of Israel by Faith, occupies no less than three ² of the sixteen chapters in this Epistle. Paul mourned over their unbelief with "great sorrow," and "unceasing pain" ³ in his heart; protesting, even in incredible words, that he could wish himself "Anathema from Christ," ⁴ for his brethren's sake, his kinsmen according to the flesh. Let us see, then, how he presents his argument under such overwhelming emotion, and how it bears on our special theme.

Vindicating God from the shallow objection, that His promise to Israel had failed—"that the

¹ Rom. viii. 37.

² Ibid. ix. to xi.

³ Ibid. ix. 2.

⁴ Ibid. ix. 3.

Word of God had come to nought,"¹ and also from the still shallower charge that God was unjust, "that there is unrighteousness with God,"²—the Apostle then presses home his own accusation, that the Gentiles had "attained to Righteousness, even the Righteousness which is of Faith," while Israel had not attained to Righteousness, "did not arrive at" the Law of Righteousness, "because they sought it not by Faith, but as it were by works." They stumbled against that Stone of Stumbling and Rock of Offence laid in Zion, whereof it is written, "He that believeth on Him shall not be put to shame."³

Now it is in the very heart of his pleading and appealing about Israel—"that they may be saved"—and in the midst of his expounding of the difference betwixt "the Righteousness which is of the Law" and "the Righteousness which is of Faith,"⁴—that the Great Apostle condenses into one pregnant sentence the substance of all this Gospel alike to Gentile and to Jew, even "the Word of Faith which we preach." And again, we are alert to know, we are most eager to learn, whether this Universal Way of Salvation, this Worldwide and Glorious Evangel,

¹ Rom. ix. 6.

² Ibid. ix. 14.

³ Ibid. ix. 30-33.

⁴ Ibid. x. 1, 5, 6.

has any place for, or sets any special value upon, the Resurrection of Jesus? Listen, then, and drink it all in from St. Paul himself, and say, if you dare, that we exaggerate the importance of this Apostolic truth, "*If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised Him from the Dead, thou shalt be saved.*"¹

Thou shalt be saved! It is not only by confessing that Jesus is Lord, but also by heartily and sincerely believing that God hath raised Him from the Dead, that Salvation is possible. Apart from that, no way of attaining unto Righteousness, no way of being saved, was known to this first and greatest of all Theologians, this last and greatest of all the Apostles.

No Resurrection of Jesus would, therefore, mean no Way of Salvation for Mankind.

(i) Last of all, in connection with this Epistle, having left behind the field of argumentation altogether—Jew and Gentile, with all their contentious belongings, being alike banished from his view—the Great Apostle sees before him only a World of Ransomed Men, and beseeches them to offer their bodies, as well as their souls, "a living Sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God." This is the alone "reasonable

¹ Rom. x. 8, 9.

service," or, rather, the true "spiritual worship,"¹ and it must be adorned with all Christian graces, in the faithful discharge of all Christian duties and responsibilities: "For none of us liveth to himself, and none dieth to himself; for whether we live, we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."²

But what has all this to do, you are asking, with our inquiry about the influence of the Resurrection of Jesus on Apostolic life and teaching? Surely, some one retorts rather crustily, Christian men may be left at peace to cultivate their Holy Living and Happy Dying without being pestered with inquisitions as to their faith in such stumbling-stones and rocks of offence as the Resurrection of Jesus from among the Dead!

Very good. *You* may leave them at ease, if you think it well to do so. But the Great Apostle knew no art of Holy Living or Happy Dying that had not its roots deep-planted in the Evangelical facts of our Lord's Earthly History, and that did not draw from Him alone—as dying, rising again, and reigning in Glory—all its life and all its force. And so he sums up his practical philosophy of the Christian life with this supreme,

¹ Rom. xii. 1.

² Ibid. xiv. 7, 8.

unquestioned, and unquestionable article of the Christian Religion : "To this end Christ died, and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the Dead and the Living."¹ In Life, in Death, in Resurrection, in Immortality, the Lord Jesus is ours,—our Exemplar, our Redeemer, and we are the Lord's !

No Resurrection of Jesus would, finally, mean no Lordship of Jesus alike over the Dead and the Living.

Human Thought, kindled and enlightened by the living Spirit of the living God, may try to expound these nine illustrations of our theme from this great Epistle, and may succeed in making them still clearer and clearer. But Human Thought never can carry us higher than these teachings of St. Paul regarding the Resurrection of Jesus, nor transcend his sublime interpretations of that event. The fact of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ—the truth that He is Risen and Reigning—is thus indissolubly bound up with every Article of the Christian Faith, and is the fountain of inspiration for every Duty and Grace of the Christian Life.

By it, for instance, Jesus Christ is declared to be the Son of God with power. By believing it

¹ Rom. xiv. 9.

we serve ourselves heirs to Abraham's faith, who staggered not at the Promise. By thinking of it, more even than of the Death on Calvary, we shall attain the assurance of Salvation ; for much more, being now justified by His Blood, we shall be saved from Wrath through Him, saved by His Life. By becoming united with the Risen Lord we learn to yield ourselves unto God, as alive from the dead, and our members as instruments of righteousness. As He died, so we die unto Sin, that we may be married to Another, even unto Him Who is risen from the Dead. Yea, our very Bodies, mortal in themselves, shall be quickened by His Spirit that dwelleth in us. Glorifying in the Cross, with its bleeding Lamb,—glorifying in the Throne with its triumphant Lord,—we are to glory still more in the Rising of our Saviour from the Tomb ; it is Christ that died, yea, *rather* that is risen again, Who is even now at the Right Hand of God ! Our very consciousness of personal Salvation is hinged on the acceptance of this supernatural fact,—if thou shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised the Lord Jesus from the Dead, thou shalt be saved. And last of all, the grace of Holy Living and Happy Dying must have struck down its roots into this the very subsoil of Redemption,—believing in that Jesus Christ, Who both died and

rose and revived again, that He might stand forth in the gaze of the Universe as Lord of Angels and of Men, Lord of the Living and the Dead, God over all, blessed for ever more !

IV.

Finally, under this division, we turn to *The Two Epistles to the Corinthians*, and ask what use do they make, what place do they give to the Resurrection of Jesus ?

Without dogmatising as to difficult questions in Chronology, it is highly probable that these two Letters were written within a few months of each other ; and also that they belong to the same great productive period as the *Romans* and the *Galatians*,—the Missionary days of St. Paul. Consequently they must have been penned several years before the writing of any of the Epistles of the Imprisonment, or the Pastoral Epistles.

We tread, therefore, still amongst the *Earlier Epistles*—tread over ground where the burning ashes of history are still hot, and within a quarter of a century of the Crucifixion ; and we ask again, with ever-kindling eagerness—*What place had the Resurrection in the teaching of the Apostle to his Christian Converts at Corinth ?* What use was made of that fact ? Of what practical value was it in shaping the Christian life amidst the

most voluptuous population in the Ancient World, and in a great Commercial Seaport Town, where every vice of Secularism and of Heathendom so flourished that it threatened to squelch out the light of the Gospel by seething pollutions that overflowed into the very Congregation of Christ ?

(a) Grappling with the dread Sin of Fornication,—a theme so difficult either for Saint or Apostle to deal with in addressing a promiscuous company, without doing more harm than good,—and yet withal a theme so vitally necessary to be treated by every teacher responsible for human welfare, that it is moral cowardice to shun the task,—St. Paul sets us a noble example how to exalt and sanctify this most perilous subject by the light in which we approach it ; and that light is shed by the Claims upon us of the risen and glorified Jesus.

Taking these Corinthian Libertines for a moment on their own level — who justified Sensualism as a thing in itself indifferent, like ordinary eating or drinking — St. Paul argues that you cannot so reason from the merely natural adaptation of “meats for the belly and the belly for meats,” both of which begin and end with this present life of Earth and Time, and shall in due course cease to be, for “God shall

bring to nought both it and them" ; you cannot, he holds, reason from the lawfulness of these things to the lawfulness of giving up the body to Fornication, since the body shall never cease to be, however it may be transformed—"for the body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body ; and God both raised the Lord, and will raise up us through His power." ¹

So, then, the argument leaps out of the mire with a bound, and that by help of the Resurrection of Jesus, up to the loftiest spiritual plane ; and the coarsest of all Sensualism is met and vanquished by the most mystical doctrine of Christianity—our union in *body*, as well as in soul and spirit, with our Risen Lord. Your very members are "the members of Christ." Can you, dare you, then, make them "the members of an Harlot ?" ² But, as if almost ashamed to have put the horrible question to Christian men and women, he drowns out the answer with an indignant exclamation, "God forbid !" And, finally, he dismisses the vile subject, as one not fit to be argued further amongst men that have heard the Name and the Claims of Jesus, with an appeal passionate in its logic and transcendent in its religious philosophy—"Know ye not that your *body* is a temple of the Holy Ghost, which

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 13, 14.

² Ibid. vi. 15.

is in you, which ye have from God? And ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price: glorify God, therefore, in your 'body!'"¹

It was thus by weapons forged at the Altar in Heaven, where sits and reigns the living Saviour, that St. Paul assailed and conquered the most awful sin of the Ancient World; not by lectures on "the Social Evil," or prurient addresses "to Men only" and "to Women only," which, from the nature of the case, do, in multitudes of poor human creatures at least, kindle far worse flames than those they try to quench!

We, though far from deliverance from the curse of pollution, have added to it the most awful sin of the Modern World, the sin of *Drunkenness*: and how are we really to rescue men from that most degrading vice? Is it by little Lectures on the physiological consequences of excessive imbibing of Alcohol? Is it by Lantern Slides illustrating in appalling diagrams the crimes, the miseries, the deaths that sleep in the demon Cup? These we disparage not,—these and all other helps we gladly use towards the training up of a pure and sober Nation. But, remember that the Twin-devils of Drink and of Lust, once really awakened in a sinful human frame, will burst asunder all these self-forged chains as if they were

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 19-20.

straws, and laugh to see them scattering on the winds of passionate Desire !

Never rest, therefore, never deem your own soul and body safe, nor the souls and bodies of those most dear to you, till we have all learned that the *body* is redeemed and is claimed by the Risen Jesus as His Temple on Earth, as truly as is the Soul the Temple of the Holy Ghost ; that those members of ours are taken into mystical union with the glorious Body of the Ascended Jesus, and are yet to be fashioned into the Heavenly likeness of His Own ; and that, if we lend our members to Uncleaness or our bodies to Drunkenness, we are polluting and degrading the members of the Body of the Lord Jesus, Who bought us with His blood, who rose that He might raise us, and Who reigns to bring us unto God.

If any Man or Woman can persistently resist that appeal from the Throne of the Lamb, and from the Lips of Jesus Himself—to be pure, to be sober—then every other appeal on Earth or in Time, beginning and ending with self or with our fellow-creatures, will in all probability be recklessly thrust aside. *Ye are not your own ; ye were bought with a price ; glorify God therefore in your body !*

(b) Passing from questions of Morals—sensu-

ality, covetousness, pride, and insubordination—St. Paul now finds himself face to face with the denial at Corinth, and amongst so-called Christians there, of what was practically the most distinctive fact and doctrine of the New Religion—the *Resurrection of the dead*. It was questioned as improbable; it was denied as impossible; it was scouted as absurd.¹ He instinctively felt that Christianity itself was here at stake; and never in all his writings did St. Paul reach a higher plane of thought, of philosophy, of religious faith, than in this most glorious RESURRECTION CHAPTER which challenges and will grandly repay our special study. For, in a way more graphic and more direct than any other page of Holy Scripture, it completely answers the question that constitutes our theme—What was the place and what the value of the Resurrection of Jesus in the life and teaching of Apostolic men and Apostolic days?

There are SEVEN STEPS on the stairway of this argument—the first planted on the plain facts of history as set forth in the Gospel, the seventh transcending all mortal vision and lifting us into the realms of victory with our Lord Jesus Christ; the first telling us of the Christ who died and was buried and rose again, the seventh striking

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 12-49.

through and beyond the clouds of Earth and Time, and inspiring the song—O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory? Let us climb these steps one by one, thoughtfully and reverently, and may God raise us all to the height of this great argument!

(1) The First Step on this Stairway that leads to Glory is a fresh and unflinching declaration of the Historical Facts on which the Gospel of the Resurrection rests; which constitute in fact the sole basis of that Gospel, or of any Gospel: "How that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures—that He was buried—that He hath been raised—that He appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve, then to above Five Hundred Brethren, then to James, then to all the Apostles, and last of all, as unto one born out of due time, He appeared to me also."¹

Oh, some of you are so transcendently spiritual that you slight this as mere History; this to you conveys no Gospel, without your own peddling inferences and views interwoven with the record of the facts. But listen to what the Great Apostle declares regarding this unadorned historical narrative of the Events themselves that at once contain and convey the Evangel to the Human Race—"Now, I make known unto you, brethren, the

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 3-8.

Gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, wherein also ye stand, by which also ye are saved, . . . if ye hold it fast, except ye believed in vain."¹ And then he proceeds to repeat what he had himself received, and what he had declared unto them first of all, namely, the historical facts set forth above, the basis of everything.

By which also ye are saved! Look long and devoutly at these words. Let your soul drink in their unfathomable meanings; and never again talk disparagingly of the value of those saving facts in the history of the Evangel. For, on these same events, and on the saving beliefs which are enshrined in them, you must plant your feet, and nowhere else, if you are ever to climb to the glory of that Life to which the Christ and His Apostles have gone.

(2) We mount now to the Second Step on the Stairway, and find the Apostle silencing objectors to the Resurrection by a series of swiftly-hurled questions and of incredible inferences, that convey a powerful *reductio ad absurdum* regarding their whole position. To analyze calmly is to miss the thrill, the passion of his argument; but we must thus first carve it into memory, and then go back and let the stream of inspired

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 1-3.

eloquence fill all the channels as it pours through our souls in unimpaired strength and freedom.

The argument here throbs all along around the emphatic "if"—at least seven times repeated.¹

"If" Christ can be thus savingly preached that He rose from the dead, "how say some among you that there is no Resurrection of the Dead?" For "if" there be no Resurrection of the Dead, then it follows inevitably that "neither hath Christ been raised."

But "if" Christ hath not been raised, then very emphatically "is our preaching vain, and your faith also is vain."

Yea, moreover, "if" the Dead rose not, we beyond all question are found to be "false witnesses of God"; because we witnessed of God, "that He raised up Christ,"—Whom in fact He raised not up, if so be that the Dead cannot be raised.

"For, "if" dead men rise not, then with double emphasis, "neither hath Christ been raised." And "if" Christ hath not been raised, then, for a certainty, "your faith is vain,—ye are yet in your sins"; that is to say, if Christ be still in His grave under the power of death, we are still under the guilt and the dominion of our sins.

Finally, "if" in this life only we have hoped

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 12-19.

in Christ, "then they also which have fallen asleep in Christ have perished," and we of all men on Earth are "the most miserable," the most to be pitied; that is to say, we lose the life that now is, and there is no life to come,—we give up for Christ's sake, and for the Glory of the Future, the joys and pleasures of this Earthly existence, but we are sacrificing ourselves in vain "if" there be no Resurrection of the Dead. We are, in that case, of all men "the most pitiable!"¹

In all this, St. Paul seems to say,—though there be mystery about the Resurrection and difficulty in believing it, there is still greater difficulty in refusing to believe. At any rate, it is preposterous and absurd, yea, a thousand times absurd, for Christian men who adore a risen Lord to allow themselves, under any pretence or for any difficulty or mystery, either to doubt or to deny the Resurrection of the dead. So that, standing on this second Step of the Ascent of Faith, and surveying the whole field here opened before us, we heartily agree with the Great Apostle, that it is *easier and more defensible for us as rational beings to face the miracle of the Resurrection*, than to face the glaringly irrational issues of denying that the Dead can be raised.

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 12-19.

(3) But a higher flight now calls us,—not merely to silence objectors, but to show the necessity of the Resurrection in the Divine Order of the Universe, and its connection with the working out of God's eternal purpose in Jesus Christ. Hereby is manifested not only the bare historical fact that Christ rose, but the Divine necessity and significance of that fact in the Redemption of Mankind. This is equivalent to arguing that if Redemption is to be at all, there must be also Resurrection from the Dead.

The first note here is a shout, an exclamation of joy, rather than a mere affirmation,—“But now Christ *hath* been raised from the Dead, the firstfruits of them that are asleep !” The Apostle foresees the glorious harvest, the Resurrection of all the Dead, as promised in this first holy sheaf, the Risen Christ, that is waved before the Lord ; and he enters upon this second portion of the Great Resurrection Chapter with a cry of exultation—“Christ *is* risen, Christ the firstfruits !”¹

And then, after his characteristic manner, he theologises as he proceeds, justifying his faith at the bar of reason and intellect, while the argument soars on higher and still higher,—“Since by man came Death, by man came also the Resurrection of the Dead ; for as in Adam all die,

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 20.

so also in Christ shall all be made alive." ¹ But here there is a Divine Plan, a Heavenly Order,—“Christ the firstfruits”; *then*, “they that are Christ’s at His coming,” that is, His *Parousia*, His glorious Appearing; and *then* again, after His *Parousia* has accomplished its purpose, and “He hath put all His enemies under His feet,” *then* cometh “THE END”; that is, the surrender of His Dominion unto God even the Father, having abolished all other rule and authority and power, that the Son also Himself may be “subjected unto Him that did subject all things unto Him, that God may be all in all.” ²

Now this seraphic glimpse into the Holy Purposes of Eternal Godhead—the Mediatorial Reign of Christ, His putting down of all other rule and authority and power, His placing all His enemies under His feet, His subduing all things unto Himself, and His final surrender of the Kingdom, the Ransomed Universe, unto God the Father—all this glory, all this wonder, hinges—*on what?* On the Resurrection. For the last enemy that shall be abolished is Death. The risen Christ shall call; and the Dead shall hear, and shall live. The Realms of Hades shall at last be completely emptied of disembodied Souls. Already it had been partly emptied, that is to say, by

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22.

² Ibid. xv. 23-28.

the rising of them that are Christ's, at His Parousia, His glorious Appearing; but now it shall be finally emptied, when the End hath come, by the rising of all the Dead, that the Judgment may be set and the Books opened. Hades is "abolished," in the sense that no Soul is left waiting in that disembodied estate. Death itself is "destroyed," in the sense that no Human Being is left under the power of the Grave. The waiting Soul goes forth from Hades; the resurrected Body goes up from the Tomb; he who was Dead lives once more, because Jesus lives.

And so the Resurrection wakes the highest note in all the New Testament Anthem of Praise. For, short of that, the holy and loving Purpose of our Eternal Father, in and through His beloved Son, could never have been fulfilled towards Mankind and this Earth and the whole Moral Universe. The Resurrection is absolutely necessary in the Divine Order, that God may be all in all.

(4) The next Step on the Stairway is what may be described as an *Argumentum ad hominem*. The reasoning is based upon an absurd and superstitious custom, which they had apparently begun to practise at Corinth, but which, taking them on their own level, would have neither meaning nor justification of any kind, if there were no Resurrection.

Some, in the Church there, were being "baptized for the Dead";¹ that is, they submitted to Baptism, in the name of, and in behalf of, those who had died unbaptized—thinking thereby to bring blessing to the Dead, or to secure their certain entrance into the Kingdom of Christ when He cometh with all His Saints. St. Paul glances at that custom with a suppressed contempt. He does not plainly argue against it, but he mentions it slightly, as having no interest to him, and only furnishing an argument against themselves. You deny the Resurrection, he seems to say, and yet you practise this folly of being baptized for the Dead! Why so, "if the dead be not raised at all?" *Why thus befool your own beliefs?* Let the Dead sleep at peace, if, indeed, their destiny be the dust. What avails this Baptism of yours to men that have no Future, no Hereafter, no coming Glory?

(5) But swiftly leaving this uncongenial line of thought, St. Paul turns to another and a most practical issue. If the Dead be not raised at all, "why do we also stand in jeopardy every hour?"² He then sweeps his eye over the life he has led in Christ Jesus the Lord, since the hour of his conversion, and epigrammatizes his whole career in the solemn protest, "I die daily."³ He recalls

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 29.

² Ibid. xv. 30.

³ Ibid. xv. 31.

the fight that he had "with beasts at Ephesus," after the manner of men, and bluntly asks, "What doth it profit me?"¹ if there be no Resurrection. And, at length, he hurls his antagonist into the mire with the bald and unvarnished declaration that no Resurrection would mean for Man the life of the Brute: "If the Dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die?"² and death will be the end of everything.

But this clear and logical victory appeases not the hunger of his soul for truth; and he implores his readers at Corinth not to be "deceived" by the pretentious wisdom of these deniers of the Resurrection, for "evil company doth corrupt good manners,"³ according to the proverb of Menander. He solemnly warns them against those who teach that as the Body is not raised again, therefore sins done in the Body, or against the Body, cannot touch, cannot hurt, the undying Soul. He appeals to them, in a holy passion at such damning heresies, "Awake up righteously, and sin not!"⁴ or, Awake out of such a drunken spiritual stupor, and see the true nature and consequences of all sin. For some men "have *no Knowledge* of God."⁵ Such teaching reveals a shameful ignorance of the Creator of the body

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 32.

² Ibid. xv. 32.

³ Ibid. xv. 33.

⁴ Ibid. xv. 34.

⁵ Ibid. xv. 34.

and the Father of the spirit ; and these men are the first AGNOSTICS. "I speak this to move you to shame,"¹ for it is a shameful thing for men made in the Image of the Lord to allow themselves to sink down to such "ignorance" of God, that they can think or talk thus foolishly of sin whether against the body or the soul, or both. Agnosticism is not a thing to be boasted of, but to be ashamed of.

Therefore, by the very instincts that raise them above mere animal eating and drinking, by the very nature that glories for Christ's sake to endure peril, to stand in jeopardy every hour, to die daily, he proves, almost despite themselves, that in their deeper faith there is an underlying belief in the Resurrection of the Dead, in the Life Beyond, in the glorious and all-reconciling Hereafter with Jesus.

(6) Deniers of the Resurrection being thus absolutely silenced, the fact being believed and the doctrine devoutly received, yet there remain grave and perplexing DIFFICULTIES, which must be grappled with, and must be relieved if not entirely solved, ere some believers in the Resurrection can enter into the joy of their faith. And so we now mount the Sixth Step on the Stairway, and standing there amongst those who devoutly

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 34.

believe in the Resurrection from the Dead, we would listen intently, while the Great Apostle tries to relieve, if he may not wholly dispel, the perplexities that surround and assail the Christian's faith.

Now all difficulties arise out of, or centre in, these two themes : (1) The manner of the Resurrection ; and (2) The quality of the Resurrected Body—" *How are the dead raised? and with what manner of body do they come?*"¹ It is a mystery ! There is perplexity !

And yet, for any Christian, with his eyes open on the world of Nature, it is "foolish," is "inexcusable," to be staggered by such a difficulty. Therefore the Apostle opens his reply with a term of sharp and strong rebuke—"O thou foolish one!"—or, more curtly, "Fool!"² For not all difficulties, even when raised by devout believers, are deserving of respect, or are creditable to their intelligence, though all may demand our forbearance and our charitable consideration. Even a "fool" has to be borne with, and much more a foolish Christian !

(x) Look then on *the process of Nature*, before your eyes every day, says the Apostle—the Seed sown, and dying, yet in its very death it quickens and springs up with a more glorious body, and

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 35.

² Ibid. xv. 36.

every Seed with its own proper and peculiar body which God hath pleased to give it.¹ Out of the buried grain, whatever it may chance to be, there rises up a new body, not the bare grain that was sown, but a new and more glorious growth with stem and flower and golden fruit ; the same, yet not the same—the same, for each seed produces its own “ proper ” kind, and so far the plant that springs from it is identical with the seed sown—yet not the same, for it is far more resplendent in quality, as when the bare grain of wheat, hard and dry and unattractive to the eye, reappears with waving stalk and wondrous increase, in some thirty, in some sixty, in some a hundredfold !

Look on these things, in the Bible of Creation, and learn that the *Body of Man*,—which is sown in the Grave Yard, the Holy Acre of God, the Garden of the Lord, and which dies and passes away, so far as we can see, into the elements out of which it was built at the first—hath yet in the eye of its Creator that indestructible germ out of which shall spring, and arise in the Resurrection, what Scripture calls the *Spirit Body*, that is, a form, a frame, fitted for the Spiritual Existence, in the Great Hereafter, of the entire redeemed and glorified Human Being. It will, in a true sense, be the same body that was buried, for God

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 36-38.

"willeth" to each His own body, as it hath pleased Him ; and yet, in a true sense, not the same body, for it is more glorious by far—it is at last transformed into a fit abode for an immortal Spirit. It is, in one word, made like unto the Resurrection Body of Jesus Christ our Lord !

(y) Now if this *sameness yet not sameness* should stagger you, this *identity* in spite of great *diversity*, betwixt the body that is buried and the body that is raised, look on Nature again, and learn, from three spheres in the World around and above you, that such a phenomenon need not perplex you ; it is Nature's own way ; it is God the Creator's characteristic in all these spheres.

Identity, side by side with Diversity—behold it (1) in the "flesh," which is common and in a sense identical to all animals, yet how remarkably diverse in the varied species : "All flesh is not the same flesh ; but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fishes."¹ The flesh of Adam was the same as the flesh of Jesus ; yet not the same, for the latter was glorified by the indwelling Christ. The flesh of Jesus crucified was the same yet not the same as that of Jesus Risen, for the latter was etherealised and con-

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 39.

stituted into a Spirit Body. It is not, therefore, contradictory of Nature, but consonant with all her operations, that the Substance of the Resurrection body, evolving out of the buried flesh, should be thus the same yet not the same—the same in kind, but more glorious by far in quality.

Identity side by side with Diversity—behold it (2) in the “bodies” of the Earthly and the “bodies” of the Heavenly inhabitants. For, little as we know of the inhabitants of other worlds, yet as Christians we can affirm that they have come on God’s errands to this Earth, clothed in “bodily” forms ; and that each of these forms was distinctively at the service of, and absolutely controlled by, its indwelling Spirit. And this, alas ! is so “diverse” from what we know of our own Earthly “bodies,” which so often dominate and drag down the spirit that is within us ! Wherefore, as there are, to our certain knowledge and observation, bodies “celestial” and bodies “terrestrial,”¹ and the glory of the one is very diverse from the glory of the other, yet both are truly “bodies”—learn that it is in no way contradictory of Nature, but consonant with admitted facts to teach, that God in restoring to each of us such a body as He hath willed in the Resurrec-

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 40.

tion of the Dead, may truly give us back our own body, though it clothe us no longer with terrestrial, but at last and for ever with celestial glory. It is the same body, but transfigured from the conditions of the Earthly to the conditions of the Heavenly existence.

Identity side by side with Diversity—behold it (3) in the sameness of the Light, yet the not-sameness of the "Lights," that is, the Luminaries or Light-bearers. The glory of each is its Light, yet sun, moon, and stars all "differ" from each other in "glory."¹ They are the same, yet not the same; as the body buried and the body resurrected may be the same, yet not the same. The body of the Past becomes clothed in the glory of the Future; once only a dim and flickering spot of light, an Earthly envelope through which twinkled a struggling Spirit; but, after the Resurrection-change, a bright and far-shining Starry Orb, a Heavenly envelope through which streams and reveals itself a triumphant Spirit. Yet, even so, there shall be Identity with Diversity. Each shall have his own body, as God hath willed; and that a body fitted for the spirit, a body adapted to the evolution of the spirit-life towards God, adapted to its capacity for knowing, serving, and adoring the Father of

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 41.

Spirits. And so there shall be different degrees in the blessedness of all blessed Souls, as one Soul differeth from another Soul in capacity of bliss. One Body and Soul shall be found capable of taking in more of God than another ; and that is the Eternal recompense for this poor, broken, yet infinitely precious life, with its discipline here below ; for "One Star differeth from another star in glory"¹—and *Capacity* is the measure of that difference, and *Service* here creates that Capacity.

Now the application of this Analogy from Nature, this Analogical reasoning from the Things Seen to the Things Unseen, is not more obvious than it is consoling ; and if it does not entirely solve, it at least greatly relieves the difficulties that surround the Resurrection. There is unquestionably in some respects identity and in others diversity between "flesh" in man and "flesh" in beasts—between "bodies" in the Heavens and "bodies" on the Earth—between the "glory" of Sun, Moon, and Stars and the "glory" of One Star as distinct from another. So also is it in the Resurrection of the Dead ; that is, of the Dead who sleep in Christ, for *here* the Apostle is speaking only and exclusively of such. Between the body that is buried, and the body that is raised, there is an identity which is

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 41.

real, side by side with a diversity that is almost immeasurable. That which was sown is the same which was raised, but it is not raised the same. "It is sown in corruption ; it is raised in incorruption : it is sown in dishonour ; it is raised in glory : it is sown in weakness ; it is raised in power : it is sown a natural body ; it is raised a spiritual body." ¹

Thus far Nature illustrates the Christian Faith. Though Creation could not reveal to us, in a convincing way, the great truth of the Resurrection of the Dead, it can strongly enforce and rationally vindicate our faith in that which has been revealed. We believe the testimony of God's Son ; and we are confirmed in that belief by the witness of God's Universe above and around us.

(2) But one other difficulty now remains—a difficulty started by the very terms the Apostle himself has employed, in the last stage of his argument, about the "natural" or *psychic* body, and the "spiritual" or *pneumatic* body. And that difficulty he now proceeds to clear away, by laying down and illustrating the conditional proposition—"If there is a natural body," ² that is, a body adapted to the life of the *Anima*, the *Psyche*, the "living Soul," whereby Man communicates

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 42-44.

² Ibid. xv. 44.

through his organs of sense with the outer and visible World; then "there is also a spiritual body," that is, there does exist and must exist a body adapted to the life of the *Pneuma*, the *Spirit*, the "higher Self," whereby Man communicates through his spiritual organs with the Invisible Spirit World, and with the Father of Spirits.

Nor is this proposition a mere philosophic speculation—as much as to say that the "Animal" body was not more thinkable, and not more necessary, than the "Spiritual" body so that the existence of the one in a sense presupposed, if not necessitated the existence of the other. No! the Spirit Body already exists in the glorified Body of Jesus our Lord; into the likeness of which, every one that sleeps in Him shall be transfigured and transformed in the Resurrection Day. For if there is an "Animal" body, fitted for the "natural" Earthly life, there is also a "Spiritual" body fitted for the supernatural Heavenly life. To believe in the one is as rational, in every way, as to believe in the other.

Still, St. Paul does not merely thrust us back on the naked logic of the case, but patiently and convincingly argues it out thus :—

First of all (1) it is consonant with Holy Scripture; for there we read that God breathed into Man, and Man became "a Living Soul."¹

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 45.

That was the first Adam, with his God-breathed Soul, and his *psychic* or animal body, whose Sons by Nature all men are. Now that body and Soul Jesus Christ assumed, and became Man, in order that, by His sinless obedience in the Flesh and by His Resurrection from among the Dead and Ascension into Heaven, He might become "a Life-giving Spirit—not only a Spirit alive for evermore and making us alive for evermore," but a Spirit in a glorified Body, "rising from among the Dead and raising others, a Man Immortal making Men Immortal, the inexhaustible Fountain of the Resurrection Life," alike for Body, Soul, and Spirit !

Further (2), if the first Adam was thus made "a living Soul" and the last Adam "a quickening Spirit," that again is in harmony with all we know of the created universe and its laws, wherein the Animal comes "first,"¹ and then the Spiritual—the higher forms of life ever evolving from the lower, never the reverse. The *psychic* or Animal body prepares the way for the *pneumatic* or Spiritual body. The first Man was "of the Earth," he came out of the mould; the Second Man is "of Heaven,"² He came out of the Heavens. And as is he that was "Earth-born," such are they also that spring from him—

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 46.

² Ibid. xv. 47.

Earthy; and as is He that is "Heaven born," and has risen from among the Dead, such are they also that spring from Him and rise together with their Lord—they are *Heavenly*.¹ Yea, as we "have borne," in this Earth-life the "image" and likeness of the Earthly Man, so "shall we also bear," in Heaven's life, the "image" and likeness of the Heavenly Man.² Or, as we have it all crystallised in another glorious portion—"Our Citizenship is in Heaven"—Heaven is our Commonwealth; "from whence also we wait for a Saviour"—the returning Lord and King; "Who shall fashion anew the Body of our humiliation, that it may be *conformed to the Body of His glory!*"³ For there is a Spiritual body, as surely as there is a Natural. And the glorified and glorious Body of Jesus Christ, now throned in the Heavens, is the Anti-type of the Human Form Divine—into the likeness of which every one that sleeps in Christ is ultimately to be changed, "from glory to glory," by the mighty working of the Spirit of God.

(7) All difficulties, even amongst believers in the Resurrection, having been thus luminously relieved, if not entirely cleared away, the Apostle now ascends the Seventh Step on the Stairway. Thither we would strive to climb up after him,

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 48.

² Ibid. xv. 49.

³ Phil. iii. 20, 21.

and reach that Heavenly plane of thought in which we can join his "Thanks be unto God which giveth us the Victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." ¹

Brushing aside all objectors, and hurling the mere cavils of the past into oblivion, St. Paul, first of all, reassures his own soul and the souls of the Christians at Corinth by a solemn and renewed affirmation of the absolute necessity of the Resurrection. It is not, properly speaking, a thing to be argued about in this way at all, but rather a spiritual and inevitable necessity of the Christian Faith; for if there be a Kingdom of God before us in the Heavens, our bodies must be fitted to enter it! "Now this I say, brethren"—this after all, and in spite of all, I affirm as indisputable and unassailable truth—"that *flesh and blood* cannot inherit the Kingdom of God." ²

As matter of fact, all the difficulties, or nearly all, by objectors to and deniers of the Resurrection notoriously arise out of their loose and irrational and un-Scriptural way of talking, as if actual flesh and blood, *the perishable materials of the Earthly body as known to us*, were to be raised up again from the grave—a wholly absurd idea, and every way indefensible! For flesh and blood, as we know them, there is and can be no

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 57.

² Ibid. xv. 50.

Resurrection. Even if there were, it would not result in a miracle of grace and wisdom, but a perfectly useless monstrosity, seeing that there could be no need for a flesh and blood body in a Spirit World. They could not enter into it; they could not inherit it—"Neither doth corruption inherit incorruption."¹

The absolute necessities of the case, therefore, make it absurd, and even impossible, that Flesh and Blood should be raised. Yea, the indispensable pre-requisites of the Kingdom of God, that is coming, demand for its inhabitants an immortal and incorruptible BODY fitted for an immortal and glorified SPIRIT.

But this necessity, so far philosophic and logical in its nature, is entirely consonant with the revealed truth, which St. Paul now proclaims on the supreme authority of Jesus the Son of God: "Behold, I tell you a mystery!"² And then he pours forth what the Spirit of the Lord had unveiled to him regarding those who "sleep" in death and shall be raised "incorruptible" at the sound of the Trump; as also regarding those who are then alive on the Earth, who shall never die, but who shall be "changed," transfigured, clothed upon with incorruption, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 50.

² Ibid. xv. 51.

Trump." ¹ Here, again, the absolute indispensableness of the Resurrection-change, in either case and in both, from the Flesh-and-Blood-Body to the Spirit-Body, strikes him as a thing not so much to be argued about as to be necessarily believed—"For this Corruptible *must* put on Incorruption; and this Mortal *must* put on Immortality." ²

So then, ultimately, the Apostle's transcendent Faith rests on the Categories of pure Reason—the *Animal* body must be changed into a *Spirit* body ere it can enter into or enjoy the Inheritance of the Redeemed. No Resurrection would, therefore, mean no Kingdom of God for our ransomed Humanity.

Planting his feet firmly there, on the Seventh Step of the Stairway—Reason and Faith at last alike satisfied, despite remaining mystery—the Great Apostle soars away into the realms of eternal Song and triumphant Praise. He sees, for all genuine believers in Jesus Christ, that Death itself is dethroned and destroyed; not only by the taking away of Sin out of the Soul, and thereby depriving death of its "sting"; but also by raising up an incorruptible Body out of the corruptible flesh and blood, and thereby robbing the grave of its "Victory." ³ Yea, as he

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 52.

² Ibid. xv. 53.

³ Ibid. xv. 54-56.

gazes, with glowing eyes, upon the Corruptible putting on Incorruption, and the Mortal putting on Immortality, he pours his ravishment into the channel grooved for him of old by the prophetic cry—"The Lord God hath swallowed up Death for ever!"¹ And then he rolls this blessed and precious idea over and over within his soul, singing above the rifled Tomb and through the realms of Emptied Hades—*O Death, where is thy Sting? O Hades, where is thy Victory?*²

Death is thus "abolished." The realms of Hades are emptied. The incorruptible Spirit-Body comes up from the Earth; the immortal and purified Soul comes out from Hades; they meet—they are for ever one and for ever blessed! Jesus Christ has therefore won the "Victory," throughout every realm, alike of Matter and of Spirit. And all ransomed Men, Women, and Children go up to Zion, and pass through the everlasting doors, singing as they are borne along to be presented to the Heavenly Father—"Victory! Victory! Victory! Thanks be unto God, which giveth us the Victory over Death and Hades, through our Lord Jesus Christ."³

Now that we have climbed this *Ladder of Faith*,

¹ Isa. xxv. 8.

² 1 Cor. xv. 55 (cf. Hos. xiii. 14).

³ Ibid. xv. 57.

in fellowship with the Great Apostle, and our heads have at length struck beyond the stars—*What, let us ask in conclusion, is to be the effect of all this transcendent teaching?* Will it unfit us for the toils and cares, the sufferings and worries and temptations of our present mortal estate? So some shallow talkers presume to argue. They warn us against what they call “doctrinal” preaching, and pretentiously counsel us to enforce the Ten Commandments—as if the most transcendent Mysteries of our Holy Faith were not full to the brim with most tremendous practical issues! Not so argued the Great Apostle. He having soared beyond Sun and Moon and Stars, in tracing out the triumphs of our Lord in the Invisible and Eternal World, here quietly steps back to solid Earth at a single stride, and calmly proceeds to inculcate the faithful and unwearied performance of every obligation of the Christian life by the force of these same supernatural truths and transcendent hopes. And so, his deliberate “Wherefore, my beloved brethren,”¹ comes on us, at the close of such a chapter, like the song of the lark after the flash of lightnings and the peelings of thunder through the sky.

All the Future World had been opened, and

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 58.

was ablaze with lights and glories that were flaming up out of the Resurrection-Victory. You fear lest the Apostle, under such inspiration, might feel it a strain to turn his eyes Earthwards once more, and to cherish the humble duties of every hour, as they lie scattered like daisies about our path. But he bends down to them lovingly and longingly. He sees them all transfigured in that new and wondrous Resurrection-light. He has gathered into his soul an inspiration for fulfilling them all faithfully and joyfully, which nothing else in the whole Universe could give. He consequently shows us that his most transcendent and spiritual Teaching is, at the same time, the most practical, the most directly ethical and uplifting of all Doctrines. Therefore he winds up his Glorious Resurrection-strain of argument and ridicule, of reasoning and of mystery, with these sober, solid, rock-like counsels.

"Be ye steadfast and unmovable," firmly seated in your faith as to the Risen Lord; never shifting from your anchorage as to the Resurrection of the Dead. "Always abounding in the Work of the Lord"—overflowing in all Christian service; over-abounding in every Christlike deed and thought. And why? What is the impulse to be drawn from all this theme? What is the

force which we inbreathe from such a study? "Forasmuch as ye know"—ye know now, know for certain in the light of the Resurrection, "that your labour is *not in vain* in the Lord"¹—which it certainly would have been, and all Life on Earth tumbled down in dumb despair, were there no Resurrection!

Therefore, with the words of the holy Apostle Peter we close our study of this theme of Glory and of Joy as here presented to us by St. Paul in one of the sublimest and most consoling pages he ever penned—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead."² Blessed, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, *for the Glory and the Joy of the Resurrection!*

(c) It might not unreasonably be anticipated that after these soaring truths of First Corinthians, Fifteenth Chapter, all other teachings about the Resurrection must fall comparatively dull. On the contrary, we are only now in the very best position to appreciate all that may follow. The man down in the Valley mistakes the heights and the distances. The Climber who has reached the

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 58.

² 1 Pet. i. 3.

hilltops measures both more truly, and better understands alike the Mountain and the Plain. And so we pass on to consider the *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, written probably within a few months of the date of the *First*; and we again ask, in pursuance of our theme—What influence had the Resurrection of Jesus on the Life and the Teaching of the Apostle, as there presented to us?

Immediately we are confronted with that graphic and memorable portion, wherein St. Paul speaks of himself and his fellow-Christians as “always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body,”¹ affirming that though we are “always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake,” yet the life also of Jesus “may be manifested in our mortal flesh”;² the very fact of being thus kept still alive almost indicating a possibility of the Resurrection-Life of Jesus so entering into a man as to render his very body imperishable! But, just stopping short of that, he adds rather this triumphant idea—“We believe, and therefore we speak; knowing that He, which raised up the Lord Jesus, *shall raise up us also with Jesus*, and shall present us with you.”³

Here, again, we have a glimpse of the End of All from another aspect. It is God who is now

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 10.

² Ibid. iv. 11.

³ Ibid. iv. 14.

making an offering to Christ. It is the Father who is presenting the Bride to the Heavenly Bridegroom. And who is the Bride? She is constituted by the ransomed Church from Corinth and elsewhere. And St. Paul knows that—whether he be sleeping in the Grave or still toiling on this Earth—in either case God will “raise” him up; that is, call him out of the tomb or transfigure him out of his mortal flesh, “by” Jesus, or, “together with” Jesus;¹ the same God and Father who raised up and transfigured Jesus Himself shall raise up Paul and shall present him as a redeemed unit in that glorious and mystic Bridal Body in which the Lord Jesus Christ shall behold of the travail of His Soul and shall be divinely and eternally satisfied.

This assured confidence—that the God who had raised up Jesus would also raise up Paul himself in Jesus—is the key to all that splendid hopefulness which makes this whole Chapter on his Life and Ministry white as the Milky Way in the Heavens with a light that streams from other Worlds. Therefore he “faints not,”² seeing he has such a Calling. Though he mournfully admits that the treasure of “the light of the Gospel of the Glory of Christ”³ has been en-

¹ Either reading, *δια* or *συν*.

² 2 Cor. iv. 1.

³ Ibid. iv. 4.

trusted to poor "earthen vessels," yet he qualifies this self-sorrow by the sanctifying reflection that thereby "the exceeding greatness of the power" may be seen to be "of God and not from ourselves."¹ And so he pours out his soul in alternate dirge and pæan—tears filling his eyes, but those tears arched with a rainbow of many-coloured hopes, till every reader wishes to exclaim at once, and in the same breath, *Miserere! Hallelujah!*

"Pressed on every side, yet not straitened; perplexed, yet not unto despair; pursued, yet not forsaken; smitten down, yet not destroyed; . . . knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also with Jesus, and shall present us with you. . . . Wherefore we faint not; but, though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day; for our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of Glory!"²

It is no straining either of this language, or of the thoughts contained in it, to declare that but for the Rising again together with Jesus—the central fact of the fourteenth verse and its issues—the rest of the triumphant chapter could never have been written by any human being,

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 7.

² Ibid. iv. 8, 9, 14, 16, 17.

neither could it have entered into the heart of man to conceive it. The Bridge of Glory—from the first verse with its “faint not,” on till the last verse with its “things that are not seen are eternal,” falls at once to pieces, and all the Pilgrims that are marching towards it shall sink through into the mighty waters of Despair, if you knock out this Key-Stone of the Arch :—

“Knowing that He, which raised up the Lord
Jesus,
Shall raise up us also with Jesus,
And shall present us with you.” ¹

Here we close our study of the *Great and Early Epistles*, asking you to note and remember that we have omitted from our review, and that deliberately, all those portions that affirm the *Parousia*, the Coming Again and the Presence of the Lord Jesus, though, every one of these indirectly yet expressly illustrates the use and value of the Resurrection in the Apostolic Age. For the Return of the Lord Jesus, and the Gathering together of His Followers unto Himself—however you may explain it—would have been a meaningless and groundless illusion, a mere cloud-wreath of spiritual fancies, apart from the historical fact of the Resurrection and its

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 14.

blessed consequences for the Christ Himself and for all that are united unto Christ.

In leaving this part of our subject, then, we fearlessly ask—

(1) Could these Epistles ever have come into existence at all, considering their spirit and their contents, if Jesus had not risen from the Dead ? and—

(2) Could the life which these Epistles reveal, and the noble ideas by which they are inspired, ever have been possible to Saul of Tarsus, had he not been kindled into rapture by the belief and assurance that, like as Jesus Christ rose from the Dead and had gone to the glory of the Father, so every human being that becomes united by faith and love to the Lord Jesus shall be “raised together with Jesus,” in glorified Body and in sanctified Soul, and shall enter at last into the glory and joy of the Redeemer ?

People may clamour about doctrinal difficulties till their dying hour ; but every single-hearted Student of the New Testament must feel and know that *these Resurrection ideas were dominating and vitalising influences in the Apostles themselves and in all their Early Followers.* We can, therefore, by no possibility escape from the dilemma, either that the Resurrection of Jesus was a glorious fact, or that such Lives and such

Characters as those which adorn the first Century of the Christian Era were built upon a miserable illusion, and were fostered and perfected by false Witnesses. The latter alternative is, in our judgment, scarcely thinkable at all. Illusions may truly accomplish much, but they cannot account for the Christ Spirit brooding over Mankind ever since, and creating a new and higher type of human beings ; nor can they explain the hitherto unknown Life-forces that began to thrill and work in Apostolic days, and never since have forsaken the souls of men ; nor, above all, can any mere illusions lay bare the secret of the Victories of Christianity through Twenty Centuries of Faith and Hope and Charity. The Evangelic facts alone can account for these !

BOOK FOURTH

**THE PLACE AND VALUE OF THE RESUR-
RECTION IN THE LATER EPISTLES OF
ST. PAUL**

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BY calling these the *Later* Epistles we do not mean to commit ourselves or others to any very specific theory as to their date ; save thus far, that they manifestly do follow, not only in time, but in contents and in the very order of their ideas, those Earlier Epistles that have already passed in review ; though, as a matter of fact, the distance betwixt the earliest of all and the latest of these Epoch-making Letters of Christendom was not probably more than twelve or fourteen years—so gloriously crowded was the life and the teaching which they enshrine. But, in any case, the FOUR EPISTLES now to be analysed will show us what place and value the Resurrection still held in Apostolic souls ; and enable us to judge whether the fire kindled

at the Altar of the Risen Christ burned on, unquenchable, through growing years, through Death itself, and still lighted the departing human Spirit through the Veil into the Eternal World.

I.

In the *Epistle to the Ephesians* we have St. Paul's Encyclical to the Churches which he had planted in Asia Minor. It was in form and in substance a *Circular Epistle*—the specific address being actually left blank, as it is still found in the most ancient authorities—"To the Saints which are at —," but, on the copy despatched to each Church, its particular name was filled in by the Apostle's instruction, if not by his own hand ; as this, *to Ephesus*.

Whensoever, therefore, you want to get away from all that is local and changing and merely accidental, in the planting of Christian Churches, go to this Epistle ; steep your soul in its wells of Apostolic teaching ; and drink in from it Divine, and therefore changeless and imperishable, conceptions regarding the Church of God on Earth. When men are squabbling, for instance, over small and sectional ideas of Catholicity and Unity, turn away from them all to this Epistle and bathe your Spirit in the only true idea, the

New Testament conception, of what constitutes the One and Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Here we find also the God-given antidote against the disease of *Sectarianism*, on the one hand, which divides into fragments the Body of Christ, and wickedly sets these to war with each other ; and the antidote against *Secularism*, on the other hand, which would swallow up the Church into the World, absorbing it and losing it there, contrary to the holy purpose of God's eternal love—a purpose which He is working out, in and through Jesus Christ, towards "the Church which is His Body"—the Fulness of Him that filleth All in All !

(a) We have not far, then, to travel into this Epistle till we find a shining instance of the place and value of the Resurrection in the midst of even these transcendent themes. For, having poured out his heart in adoration of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath "blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the Heavenly places"—such as holiness without blemish, the adoption of sons, redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, a heritage unto the praise of His glory, and sealing with the Holy Spirit of promise, "which is an earnest of our inheritance unto the redemption

of God's own possession " ¹—he proceeds to assure them of his ceaseless thanksgiving to God on behalf of them, and of his ceaseless mention of them in his prayers. *Now, for what does he pray?* He prays, he ceaselessly prays, "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory," may give to them "a spirit of wisdom and revelation"—that the "Eyes of their Heart" may be enlightened "to know what is the hope of His calling, what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the Saints, and what the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe." ²

But, then, when he turns round and seeks for some standard wherewith to measure or at least to compare this "exceeding greatness of God's power" toward us who believe, he can find it only in "the working of the strength of His might, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the Dead, and made Him to sit at His Right Hand in the Heavenly places." ³ *That is the Standard*—the working of the mighty power of God in the Resurrection of Jesus. *That is the pledge* that we shall be raised, first of all, out of our sins into the New Life here on Earth ; and finally, out of our graves into the Blessed Life where Jesus is. You ask me for proof, for

¹ Eph. i. 3-14.

² Ibid. i. 15-19.

³ Ibid. i. 19, 20.

evidence—my proof is there, Jesus Risen ; my evidence is there, Jesus on the Throne ; *my argument ends in this*—the Mighty Power of God that raised and throned Jesus, can save and raise and throne me beside Him in the Heavens. It is the Spirit of the Mighty God ; it is the mighty working of that same Almighty Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead ; it is that exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe—that is pledged to restore to the God and Father of Jesus every Human Being whom He ransomed with His blood, to raise us from among the Dead and to plant us, in resurrected Body and in sanctified Soul, beside Jesus Himself, and made at last like unto Jesus in the Heavenly Places.

Get ideas such as these into the mind and heart of Christian people, and you instantly raise them thereby into a plane of thinking and of living, where all small and perishing interests of the passing hour are either swallowed up and forgotten, or lifted up and glorified, in the assured consciousness that the Divine Spirit is working in us and through us, yea, working mightily to bring to fruit the purposes of Eternal Love ; in literal fact, that the Spirit of God is working, in all believing Souls, in some measure as He wrought in Christ Himself. But, if you will insist on further light, then I can but answer,

with all the Apostles—Think on the Resurrection of Jesus, think on His enthronement beside God, and learn that “that exceeding greatness of God’s power” that wrought in Jesus is working in you that believe on Jesus, and working towards similar issues ;—working to lift you through the Christ-life out of and above your sins, to raise you by and by, in the Christ-life, out of your graves, and to set you, as ransomed and glorified, beside Himself in the Heavenly Places. Glory—Glory—Glory—to the mighty Spirit of the living God !

(b) Further, this mention of the Ascension and Glory of Jesus, as wrought out by the mighty Spirit of God—the same who is now working mightily in us who believe—suggests to the Apostle the analogy betwixt the Resurrection of the Saviour and the Regeneration of the Sinner ; that is, the “quickenings” of a Soul out of its death in trespasses and sins into a new and spiritual life, upon which so much of his teaching is based ; and so he reaffirms it all, with increasing fervour, in the Second Chapter of the Epistle ; to which now let us lovingly turn.

He reminds them that they were “dead” through their trespasses and sins, wherein aforetime they walked, in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath ; but that God, Who

is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved them, had "quickened" them together with Christ, and "raised them up," and made them "sit" together with Him in the Heavenly Places in Christ Jesus.¹ So, then, the historic Resurrection of Jesus, by the mighty power of God the Spirit, is the Divinely attested type and pledge of the "quickening" and "raising up" of the human Soul out of the tomb of trespass and sin into the daylight of the new and spiritual life by the same life-giving power. If Jesus be not raised, then neither can our *souls* be quickened and made alive unto God now, any more than our dead *bodies* can be quickened and made alive at the last day. No Resurrection of Jesus means no Regeneration for Mankind. The "quickening" of the body of Jesus, and the raising of it from the Tomb, are the symbols and the assurances of the "quickening" of our souls by the same Spirit, and the raising of us from the grave of Sin.

Nor lacks there motive for all this, worthy even of God our Father. It is "that, in the Ages to come, He might show the exceeding riches of His grace, in kindness toward us, in Christ Jesus."² *The exceeding Riches of His Grace*—to be shown forth to the Ages that are to come—

¹ Eph. ii. 1-6.

² Ibid. ii. 7.

to be illustrated by the loving-kindness of God toward us in Jesus Christ ! See there the ultimate, the Eternal issues of the Resurrection ;—baffled every one, if Christ be not risen.

Enough ! The whole Epistle lives and breathes in the Resurrection air. The mystery of the Gospel, the unity of Jew and Gentile in Christ, for which Paul as he pens these words is “an ambassador in bonds,” had never even been known unto him at all, much less been proclaimed by him throughout the world, had not Jesus of Nazareth, once laid in the sleep of death in Joseph’s tomb, been raised to the Throne of God, and then revealed Himself to the Apostle by His *Epiphaneia* (the out-shining of His Presence) out of the Heavenly Places. Thither, by the power of the same mighty Spirit, the Spirit of the Resurrection, we follow our Brother, our Saviour, our Redeemer King.

II.

In this series we pass now to what may well be called THE LOVE-LETTER OF ST. PAUL ; for his affection to his dearly beloved *Philippians* is comparable only to the purest and holiest passion which man can ever cherish—“God is my witness, how I long after you all in the tender mercies of Christ Jesus !”¹

¹ Phil. i. 8.

Now, here we find the Great Apostle in his best and highest mood—unprovoked by Judaizers, ungrieved by the apostasy of volatile Galatian converts ;—his heart heaving with every emotion of gratitude and affection towards the Philippians ; even as they burned with loyal devotion towards himself, and had sent their own Epaphroditus to Rome, to minister to their beloved Apostle's necessities, bearing with him their gifts, " an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God." ¹

We open, therefore, this Epistle of the Heart, that we may learn from its contents whether the Resurrection-teaching finds any place or value in this serene sphere of Spiritual Love ; or, whether the Apostles and these Disciples at Philippi have reached a height on which they can afford—as some moderns pretend—to ignore the fact and the issues of the Rising of Jesus from among the Dead.

(a) He has been assuring his affectionate Philippians that the apparently distressing things which had happened unto him " have fallen out rather unto the progress of the Gospel " ; so that his bonds have become manifest in Christ " throughout the whole Prætorian Guard and to all the rest in the Palace " ; and this gives

¹ Phil. iv. 18.

him occasion to glory in his chains for the honour and fame that they bring to his Lord and Master, most of the Brethren, through his bonds, waxing "more abundantly bold to speak the Word of God without fear."¹ He has also been, ever so gently, touching upon the fact that "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife," not sincerely, thinking to raise up affliction for him in his bonds ;—while "others preach Christ of goodwill and love,"² knowing that the Apostle had been set where he is for the defence of the Gospel. But now he glances away from every personal consideration, or ephemeral incident, and crowns the whole reference to others with the ever-resplendent and far-shining declaration—"What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and therein I do rejoice—yea, and will rejoice."³ He counts, accordingly, upon their "supplication," and the "supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ," that the Lord and Saviour may be "magnified" in his body, and that "whether by life or by death." In fact, he is "in a strait betwixt the two"—desiring to depart and to be with Christ, which is "very far better"; yet willing to abide in the flesh if it be "more needful" for their sake—for, in any case, "to

¹ Phil. i. 12, 14.² Ibid. i. 15-17.³ Ibid. i. 18.

him to live is Christ, and to die is Gain."¹ But his final and confident hope is, that he shall "abide," yea, and abide with them all, for their "progress and joy in the faith"; and so he appeals to them to let their "conversation," that is, their manner of life, their citizenship, be worthy of the Gospel of Christ; be such as "becometh," that is, "adorneth," the Name of Jesus which they bear.² Nay, the same appeal rises into a vehemence of affection in the *second* Chapter, which practically amounts to putting the Philippians on their solemn oath in the presence of God—"I adjure you, if there is therefore any comfort in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassions, fulfil ye my joy!"³

And *how*, let us now ask, *is all this to be accomplished?* Where, in all the Cycle of Truth, Human or Divine, shall the motive-force be found? Only in one transcendent and glorious series of events—the Incarnation and Humiliation, the Resurrection and Exaltation of our blessed Redeemer. Therefore, that he may inspire them to rise far above all petty "strife and vainglory," to look not every man "to his own things," but every man also "to the things of others," and to have "the same mind

¹ Phil. i. 19-24.² Ibid. i. 27.³ Ibid. ii. 1,

in them" which was also in Christ Jesus,—St. Paul soars away into the loftiest and most spiritual themes of thought, reminding them how Jesus Christ, being "in the form of God," and "on an equality" with God, "emptied Himself," and, being found in fashion as a Man, "humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the Cross"; and, further, how, on that very account also, God "highly exalted Him and gave unto Him the Name which is above every name; that in the Name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."¹

Now in all this glorious teaching and appeal the Resurrection of Jesus is never once explicitly referred to or named; *yet it alone, in silent majesty, dominates the whole field of spiritual vision.* It was the first immediate step wherein the Exaltation of Jesus took its rise; and without it all that follows were for ever impossible. It may seem almost hackneyed, but it graphically represents what we mean when we declare that to try to write, or even to think, this portion of Holy Scripture, without the Risen Jesus glowing before your mind and reflecting His light through every verse, would be more absurd than any

¹ Phil. ii. 2-11.

attempt that could be made to render the play of "Hamlet" with the Prince himself left out. Such thoughts are only possible to the man who, when he writes, "God hath highly exalted Him," sees the Rolling away of the Stone, the Empty Tomb, the Opened Heavens, and the Living Christ enthroned at the Right Hand of God. There, and there only, O ye Philippians, is the well and fountain of inexhaustible Force—for all true and unselfish and blessed living and suffering here upon Earth—"Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." ¹

Higher influence than this no human being can ever attain ! More practical, more beneficent, more deathlessly enduring power for good than what comes from drinking in the mind and spirit of Jesus there is none known, nor ever shall be, in the Universe of God. To the visitor in a Leper Hospital—where ordinary human beings could scarcely breathe, but where a Princess and her Sister Nurses were affectionately ministering to the poor sufferers, who were dropping by inches into the Grave—when he exclaimed, in the usual shallow language of the world, "Oh, what love of Humanity must inspire you !" there came the deep and true retort, as if flashing out of the Heavens, swift and starlit, "*Humanity*,

¹ Phil. ii. 5.

did you say ? The mere love of Humanity would not keep us here one single hour ! The love of Christ constraineth us."

These fires are kindled by no human passion, however lofty or pure it be ; but only at the flame of Love that burns for ever on the Altar of Calvary—the passion for Men in the Heart of God.

(b) One more portion in this Epistle closely bears upon and shiningly illustrates our present theme. St. Paul is warning his beloved Philippians against "having confidence in the Flesh";¹ and, as is his wont, he enforces all his appeals to others by his own spirit and example. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof to boast in the Flesh the Apostle claims still more—"as touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless."² Howbeit, these and all such things he counts as only "loss," though they once appeared to be "gain," yea verily, he reckons them all as "refuse" now, that he may "gain Christ and be found in Him"; and that he may "know Christ and the power of His Resurrection and the fellowship of His Sufferings"; and, finally, that he may, "if by any means, attain unto the Resurrection from the Dead"³—that is, "out from" among the Dead.

Two things here powerfully arrest us. The *first*

¹ Phil. iii. 4.

² Ibid. iii. 6.

³ Ibid. iii. 7—11.

is, that St. Paul treats all other knowledge or virtue as, comparatively, mere off-scourings from the Altar of Human Vanity when set against the "knowledge" that comes from experiencing the power of Christ's Resurrection, and the "righteousness" that springs from fellowship with His sufferings. And the *second* is that the prize, for which the Apostle struggled and suffered and prayed—the holy ambition that fired his soul and glorified his character and made him under Jesus the greatest moral and spiritual force that this Earth has ever known—was, *What?* Was it that he might rise "from the Dead"? The notion is absurd. He would attain that at the last day without any striving on his part. No! but that he might be found worthy to share in the blessed and holy resurrection "out from among" the Dead—*The First Resurrection*. This was what he strove and struggled after—that he might attain, by his services and sufferings for Christ, and for those for whom Christ died, an honour and a glory compared with which all honours of this world are but as dung beneath his feet, namely, the glory and the honour of being raised "out from" among the Dead, and exalted to share the joy of the Lord Jesus, when He cometh to claim His Bride, and to set up His Throne in glory and in power over all the Thrones of Earth and Time.

Fellow-Christian, does that "First" Resurrection fascinate *your* imagination and kindle *your* soul? Would you cast away as "refuse" everything that this World, or all the realms of Time, can offer you, for the assurance that, in that Day of Power and Great Glory, you shall be called "out from among" the Dead to meet your Saviour, and to enter into the joy of your Lord? Then remember that the only pathway to this exceeding and eternal weight of glory and of joy is to know, now and here, amid your sufferings and sorrows and sins, the "power" of His Resurrection; that is, to know, in the reviving and quickening experience of your own Soul, the working of that same Almighty spiritual power that raised Jesus from the Dead, "energising in you," and raising you up "from out" the Tomb where self and sin had laid you, into the New Life, the Life of the Resurrection;—yea, it is to know the power which the fact and the thought that Jesus is risen and reigning exercises on your whole Inner Man, the motives which it inspires, and the incalculable force which it instils into every single-hearted and loyal disciple of the Lord.

Who needs to envy Apostle or Prophet or Evangelist of the olden times? Are we not closer to the Coming Glory of Jesus than they ever were?

The Dawn is redder—the Dayspring is glowing warmer on the Mountain-tops—let us rise and go early forth to greet the approaching Sun. Let us keep the heart wide open, that through all its windows and doors may pour in the rushing splendours. Let us hold our life itself at His daily and hourly call, and be ready to spring up with songs of childlike ravishment, even at the earliest hour of Morn, when the first ray strikes our opening eyes, and we dance out on the green-sward, happy to hail the Coming of the King !

O ye, all whose other hopes have been buried, to whom all this World's life grows ashen-grey, and duller every day that dawns, now, once for all, let the Dead Past bury its Dead, and swallow up all your fleeting disappointments and momentary sorrows by dipping your empty Heart deep into this Ocean of Hope that rolls eternally around the Name and the Coming of Jesus. Make the Appearing of Jesus in His Glory, now and henceforth, your one and great and blessed Hope. Then and there a New Life will pour itself into your withered Soul, and a new passion will flame through the heart that seemed dead. *A New Hope*—the hope of sharing in the joy of your Lord—of seeing His Bridal Day—will be kindled on the altar of your spirit ; that Great and Blessed Hope which Death cannot quench, which the

Grave cannot bury, but which will shine on, brighter and brighter, till the perfect day ;—that Day of glory and joy, when faithful Disciples shall attain unto “the Resurrection out from among the Dead,” and shall be called to meet their Lord in the Air, and so shall be for ever with the Lord.

III.

From what has been called *The Letter of Love* we now turn to what may be described as THE LETTER OF PHILOSOPHY, the Epistle to the *Colossians*. In it we have the nearest approach anywhere made by St. Paul to a philosophic grappling with Heresy, then showing its front in dawning Gnosticism ;—a blend betwixt Judaizing Ritualism on the one hand and Pagan Superstitions on the other ; but then and ever since essentially the same, and always abiding with us, viz., *the heresy of seeking Salvation by mere human Wisdom and Knowledge*, by human speculations and ceremonials, by theories of Man and of the Universe, which make void the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In one word, it means Salvation by Philosophy, instead of Salvation by the Son of God. The keynote, therefore, of this whole Epistle is found in the cry, “Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you, through his philosophy

and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."¹

Now our inquiry is : What was the place and use of the Resurrection of Jesus in Apostolic life and teaching as contrasted with and setting itself to overthrow the life and teaching of a misguided Philosophy or a Science falsely so called ? Had St. Paul a Philosophy of the Gospel, a Science of the Cross, wherewith to break down all their illusions ; and, if so, *what place was found therein for the Risen Christ ?* In this Letter to the *Colossians*, or nowhere else in the New Testament, shall we find the Gospel, as the Wisdom of God unto Salvation, set in its glorious and exclusive Supremacy, as beyond and above all the pretentious Wisdom of Man—that fruitless, if not also false, Philosophy which, whatever else it may do, cannot take away Sin, cannot restore us unto God our Father in the fellowship of perfect love.

(a) He tells the Colossians of his prayers for them and his thanksgivings to God ever since their own faithful Epaphras declared unto him their "love in the Spirit."² And the trend of these prayers may be fairly interpreted to mean that he had learned also from the same anxious Minister the serious peril they were coming

¹ Col. ii. 8.

² Ibid. i. 8.

under through the spread of a *false* Philosophy in their quiet Phrygian Valley. For he pleads with unceasing supplications that they might be filled with the Knowledge of God's will "in all spiritual wisdom and understanding," and that they might "increase in the Knowledge of God," in order thereby "to walk worthily of the Lord, bearing fruit in every good work," and "strengthened" unto all patience and long-suffering with joy, "giving thanks unto the Father."¹ And then, having thus mentioned the name of the Lord Jesus and the name of the Father, and knowing that these vain Philosophies at Colossæ were speculating among them about "Æons" and "Emanations" and "Angels" and "Powers" who were supposed to intervene, rank above rank, betwixt the human Soul and God, St. Paul undermines by one overwhelming stroke that whole fabric of fancy and proclaims that in God the Father, and through the mediation of the blessed Jesus, *alone and exclusively*, the entire Grace of the Gospel and every conceivable blessing of the Spirit may be obtained by any human being without money and without price. This is "the Gospel," exclaims he, "which ye heard, which was preached in all Creation under Heaven."²

¹ Col. i. 9, 11.

² Ibid. i. 23.

Of God the Father St. Paul declares that He hath "made us meet to be partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in light"; that He hath "delivered us out of the Power of Darkness"; and that He hath "translated us into the Kingdom of the Son of His Love."¹

Of the Son of God he glowingly affirms that in Him "we have our Redemption, the forgiveness of our sins;"² that it was the good pleasure of the Father "through Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, having made peace through the Blood of His Cross"—whether "things upon the Earth" or "things in the Heavens;"³ and that the "Mystery" which had been "hid from all ages and generations," but now hath been "manifested to His Saints"—the riches of the Glory of this Mystery among the Gentiles is "Christ in you, the Hope of Glory."⁴

Thus, instantly and utterly, all their foolish theorisings about the "Sinfulness of Matter" fall to pieces, and never can be reconstructed. All such vain philosophising perishes in presence of this Supreme Claim that the Christ Spirit, who enters into us through the Gospel, sanctifies and glorifies alike the body and the soul; and that the Father in Heaven is reconciling all things unto Himself through the Blood of the Cross.

¹ Col. i. 12, 13.

² Ibid. i. 14.

³ Ibid. i. 20.

⁴ Ibid. i. 26, 27.

All this, however, shines out more clearly still when we analyse St. Paul's own Divine Philosophy, and set steadily before us his Theory of the Universe, as against men's speculative dreams about "Æons" and "Angels" and "Emanations."

The Son is the "Image of the Invisible God"—the visible presentation of the invisible; the "First-born of all Creation"¹—in whom the whole Created Universe, potentially, existed. Yea, as matter of revealed fact, not only in Him, but by Him, God created all things "in the Heavens and upon the Earth"—things "Visible" and things "Invisible," whether "Thrones or Dominions or Principalities or Powers,"—all things have been "created through Him and unto Him," and He is "before all things," and in Him "all things consist."² It is, therefore, not only false, it is unspeakably absurd, to intrude any or all of these Created Intelligences, betwixt the Human Soul and the Christ of God, as Mediators or Intercessors. At the highest they are only Creatures, as we ourselves are—whereas our Divine Mediator and Intercessor is the Creator of all, and in Him all things "consist"—*i.e.*, the whole Universe is "held together"—in Him.

¹ Col. i. 15.

² Ibid. i. 16, 17.

Further, this same Son of God's Love is the "Head of the Body," which is His Church ; and the "Beginning" of the New Creation, the "First-Born from the Dead," that is, "out from" among the Dead ; in order that in all things, and among all beings, the "pre-eminence" ¹ might belong to Jesus alone. He is Lord of Creation, by whom all things were created, and in whom all things and beings subsist. He is Lord of Redemption, in whom all things are being reconciled unto the Father, and by whom all are saved. It were a dishonouring of this glorious and perfect Saviour to talk of any created being in all the Universe as worthy to be named in the same breath, much less as either controlling or conditioning His eternal and unconquerable love !

And now we have reached the Summit, from which we can behold *that the Resurrection-idea once more dominates all the scene*. It is well to think of Jesus as the "First-Born of the whole Creation" ; but what of that, unless He be also the "First-Born from among the Dead" ? All the glory of this material Universe would vanish into gloom and despair if the Lord and Creator could not Himself bring back from the Realms of Death that *body* that was laid in Joseph's tomb. So that the key to all Divine Philosophy is found

¹ Col. i. 18.

hanging on the door of the empty Sepulchre of Jesus. The First-Born from the Dead is the "Head" of a New Race—ransomed and glorified Human Beings; and the "Beginning" of a New Creation—the Heavens and the Earth wherein dwelleth Righteousness. The Risen Jesus reigns, with Almighty Creative energy, in the *Souls* that receive Him as Lord, and He will yet make them holy as He Himself is holy; and the Risen Jesus reigns, not less with Almighty Creative energy, in their *Body* which He hath ransomed, and will yet raise out from among the Dead. His present Resurrection-glory in the Heavenly Places is at once the pattern and the pledge of the coming glory of every Redeemed person—"We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him even as He is." We shall be changed into the same Image, the likeness of the First-Born from among the Dead—the first that ever rose from the grave and ascended on high, the first that ever carried our Glorified Humanity into the Heavenly Places;—at once the token and the type of numbers numberless to be raised by Him from the Dead, and presented to God the Father, glorified and immortal and incorruptible.

Again, I repeat, *the Key to all Divine Philosophy*, to every God-honouring theory of the Universe, of its first origin, and of its future destiny, lies in

the fact, and in the idea enshrined in the fact, that Jesus now on the Throne, Who was the "FIRST-BORN OF CREATION" is also the "FIRST-BORN FROM THE DEAD." Blot out that twofold fact, and the whole Universe, with Man at the heart of it, becomes a mystery that maddens, a dread and devouring puzzle, the plaything of Demons, the football of a blind and a heartless Fate. But give us Christ the First-Born, at the beginning of the Creation of All, and Christ the First-Born from the Dead, at the beginning of the New Creation;—and then the Mystery, hid from Ages, begins to glow with light from Heaven,—the Christ in you is the hope of Glory, every Man into whom the Christ-Spirit enters may at last be presented to God the Father, perfected in Christ. And so the riddle of the Universe finds its only and eternal solution in and through the Resurrection of the Son of Man, the First-Born from among the Dead !

(b) On this basis St. Paul grounds his appeal in the Second Chapter, that as they had "received" Christ Jesus the Lord, so should they continue to "walk" in Him, "rooted and builded up" in Him, and "established" in the faith which they had been taught, "abounding"¹ in thanksgiving. And the immediately succeeding verses throw

¹ Col. ii. 6, 7.

back light on the form of this appeal, and reveal to us the danger against which the Apostle was arming the Colossian Christians. It was a system of human Philosophising, at once *Judaistic* in its fleshly rites and external ordinances, and at the same time *Hellenistic* in its Pagan myths about Angels and Demons, the essential Evil of Matter and the Mediation of many Hierarchies in our deliverance from sin and restoration to God.

Beware, exclaims St. Paul, lest any one should "make a spoil of you," through such Philosophising, which is nothing else than "vain deceit," after the tradition of men and "not after Christ."¹ He, your Lord and Saviour, needeth not the aid of other Mediators or Intercessors. They are all His ministering Servants, created for Him and by Him; for He Himself is "the Head of all Principality and Power."² And we, His followers and friends, need not their aid, in this world, or in any world; save only in so far as they are sent forth by Him to minister unto them who shall be Heirs of Salvation. For in the Christ Himself, our Redeemer and King, "dwelleth all the *fulness* of the Godhead bodily,"—that is, all of God that can be manifested in or communicated to Mankind;—and we, that are united by faith and love

¹ Col. ii. 8.

² Ibid. ii. 10.

to the Lord Jesus, "in Him are made full,"¹ are "complete" in Christ alone, who thus links us on to the *Pleroma*, the All-fulness of Blessing that our poor Humanity can receive out of the fountain of Godhead. Beyond this, neither Angels nor Archangels nor all the Hierarchies in Heaven can carry us. Christ is our All and in All. In Jesus we are "complete," we are "full"; ultimately, we shall be, dare I say it, full of God?

But how are our humble brains to grip hold of this transcendent and supernatural Philosophy? Does it not soar beyond us, like those very speculations against which it is here hurled in argument? No! For it comes to us neither in cabalistic books nor in misty speculations nor in vague traditions; but by an altogether different pathway it comes—namely, in the Life on Earth, the Death upon the Cross, the Resurrection from among the Dead, and the Ascension of the Son of Man into the Heavenly Places. In the *Incarnation* God Himself "dwelt" in Jesus; in our Regeneration Jesus comes into us by His Spirit and dwells in us; and so we are "complete" in Him, the Christ in us. In the *Circumcision* of Christ we also are "circumcised with a Circumcision not made with hands,"² and are enabled

¹ Col. ii. 9, 10.

² Ibid. ii. 11.

by His mighty in-dwelling Spirit to "put off," and cast away, "the body of the Flesh," that is, to cut away everything that is sinful in our Human Nature, the Divine part alone remaining to be at length transformed into the glorious likeness of the Body of the Son of Man in the Heavens. In *Baptism* we are "buried" with Christ,—we die unto our past sin, we become as it were dead and buried to that which formerly had dominion over us. In the *Resurrection* we rise up out of the Grave where sin had laid us, we rise up together with Christ into the New Life; and this Rising is accomplished in us "only through faith in the working of God, who raised Jesus from the Dead."¹ So that, once more, the Resurrection-Faith is the key-stone in the arch of that majestic bridge that carries us in a single span from "Death in Sin" to "Glory in the Lord."

Nay, in all the steps of our Conversion, till our final presentation to the Father,—that is to say, in the "quickening" of us who were "dead through trespasses and the uncircumcision of the flesh"; in "forgiving" us all these trespasses; in the "blotting out" of the bond written in Ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us; in the taking of it out of the way and

¹ Col. ii. 12.

"nailing it to the Cross," and thereby cancelling it for ever,—in all these steps, Jesus our Lord, so far from needing the aid or fearing the opposition of Angel or Demon, so far from being in any sense or degree controlled or conditioned by any created beings, did, on the contrary, "put off" from Himself the Principalities and the Powers, and make "a show of them openly,"¹ triumphing over them in the Cross! Jesus leads them all either as His ministering Servants, or as Captives behind His Car of Victory, while the Universe thunders its applause.

Amidst this majestic Panorama of the Things of the Spirit, let us not obscure nor forget that glorious Resurrection-Fact, which alone makes all the rest either thinkable or possible. Hold to the Living Head, "hold fast the Head," the Risen and Reigning Christ in the Heavens; from Whom all "the Body," the whole ransomed Church on the Earth and in Heaven, "being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands," "increaseth with the increase of God."² Hold fast to Him, your Risen Lord; and then no man shall be able to "rob you of your prize," by a voluntary humility and worshipping of Angels . . . vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast the Head."³

¹ Col. ii. 13, 15.² Ibid. ii. 19.³ Ibid. ii. 18.

The true antidote, therefore, against all delusions about Angels and Spirits, Emanations and Incarnations, Virgin-Worship and Demon-Worship, Mahatmas and the like, is a clear vision of the Christ upon His Throne, Jesus our Lord ascended to the Right Hand of the Father and wielding all power in Heaven and on Earth for His Body's sake which is the Church. They who see in Him "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily"—treasured up there for His ransomed people, and at call for every conceivable human need—turn away with a sense of loathing from any appeal to Angel or Spirit or Virgin, to Mahatma or Demon. What and who are they? At the best, only the creatures of His hand like ourselves; at the worst, perchance, only creatures of our own Imagination; while He, our Lord and Saviour, our Mediator and Judge, is the Creator of the Universe, the Redeemer of Mankind; and, by faith and love, our life is linked on to His Life—We are "complete" in Him; we need no other Advocate—we shall pray to no other Intercessor, on the Earth, or in the Heavens!

(c) Lastly, St. Paul shows the bearing of all this transcendent teaching on the duties and the trials of our Earthly life; so that the Epistle of Philosophy, soaring amongst the loftiest ideas in the realms of New Testament thinking, finds its

ethical issues in the fervent enforcement of purity and charity, humility and brotherly kindness; the resolute inculcation of the duties of wives and husbands, children and parents, servants and masters; in a single word, all the Virtues of the Religious life, and all the Graces of the Christian character are made to hang upon these transcendent conceptions that cluster around the risen and reigning Christ of God. And this is how he steps down, so to speak, from the triumphal car of the victorious Lord of Angels and of Men, whither he had borne us to witness the procession of the Christ leading Captivity captive,—steps down, and, laying hold of the central idea of all, that which at present engages our thoughts, shows the place and value of the Resurrection of Jesus, not only in Apostolic teaching, but also in Apostolic life: “If, then, ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above . . . Mortify your members, which are upon the Earth. . . . Put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man. . . . Put on, as God’s elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion. . . . And above all these things, put on love, which is the bond of perfectness. . . . Let the peace of God rule in your hearts. . . . Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom . . . And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all

in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."¹

There shines before us such an outline of beautiful, beneficent, and blessed living on this Earth, as no Philosopher in ancient or in modern days has ever dreamed of as possible ; and it all hinges on the Resurrection-idea—"If" ye then be risen together with Christ ! *Risen*, out of the Sepulchre of the Self-life, as He rose out of Joseph's Tomb ; *risen* out of the Grave where Sin had laid you, and beginning your Ascent to the Father, as Jesus rose from among the Dead and ascended to the Heavens and is now seated at the right hand of God.

A man reads, in a certain mood, the two first Chapters of this Epistle, and, as he tries to soar after St. Paul, now to the beginning of a New Creation, the rising of Jesus from the Dead, and then to the beginning of All Things, the rising of the Son from the bosom of the Father, he is tempted to call the Apostle a dreamer, a poet, a speculative philosophiser, that outmatches all the dreams of literature, and has lost his head amongst the stars. But, if a wise man, he reads on and on, he ponders the third and the fourth Chapters, pulsing in every verse with daily human interests, throbbing blood-warm through all the

¹ Col. iii. 1, 5, 9, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17.

duties and the trials of our Earthly existence ; *carrying the Christ-Spirit into every sphere of life*,—secret, as betwixt God and the Soul,—domestic, as betwixt kindred and friends,—public and national life, as betwixt man and man,—Church life and Civic life, as betwixt fellow Christians and fellow Citizens,—and showing there, how, in every possible human surrounding on this Earth, the Christ-Spirit leads on to all beneficent, beautiful, brotherly, and noble living under Heaven. And, when we hear him cry, with holy Passion—“ *Whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus*”—in the Name, that is, in the Spirit, by the power, and after the example of the Lord Jesus—then, at length we learn that this, the most transcendent of all Philosophies, is the most truly practical ; that this, the most supernatural of all Religions, is the most fruitful in good deeds. Nay, we learn, finally, that the most irresistible and exalting Motive, that can be brought to bear on the life of any man on Earth, is the abiding vision of the Lord Jesus in the Heavenly Places, and the deliberate and sustained effort to serve and please Him as our Redeemer King ;—in a single word, it is the Resurrection-life,—the Seeking of the Things above, rather than the Things on the Earth.

IV.

In this study, we have now reached the *Second Epistle to Timothy*; and one is tempted to call it **THE LETTER OF MARTYRDOM**. It breathes the atmosphere of a Soul that is laid upon the Altar of Sacrifice—"I am already being offered, and the time of my departure is come." ¹

(a) Such a time, of all others, tests the use and value of Religious truth. What still abides with us then may be regarded as vital to Christianity. We know, for fact, that when the Soul is looking through the rending Veil, and is face to face with a lonely journey up to God, much that was before highly prized passes utterly out of view. So-called Doctrines, that were once the symbols of deadly strife amongst brethren in Christ, cease to be visible at all in the flooding light that begins to fall on the ascending Spirit. And the only Faith that remains is the personal trust that clings to the Lord Jesus Christ, and commends the believer to God the Father's loving hands. We want, then, to ascertain whether, in such a crisis, the Resurrection-idea still finds a place; whether the Rising of Jesus our Saviour from among the Dead proves itself to be an essential and indispensable article in that Christian Faith, with which Apostles

¹ 2 Tim. iv. 6.

and Martyrs faced death itself and rose in triumph unto God.

Read, now, the opening verses, and let the spirit of the writer pour itself into, and through and through, your soul. He remembers, in prayers "unceasing" night and day, this Timothy, his dearly-beloved Son ; "longing" to see him ; "remembering" his tears,¹—poured out so freely, in all probability, when he saw the beloved Apostle arrested for the last time and sent to die at Rome. He is reminded of "the unfeigned faith," which dwelt first in Timothy's grandmother Lois, and then in his mother Eunice ; and he adds tenderly—"I am persuaded, in thee also."² Wherefore, the Apostle puts him in remembrance "to stir up the gift of God," which is in him through "the laying on of hands"³ at his Ordination to the Ministry ; for God has given us "not a spirit of fearfulness," or cowardice in face of trials—against which, because of his shrinking temperament, Timothy may have needed to be specially warned ; but the spirit, rather, "of power and love and discipline" ;⁴ that is, a spirit of high and holy self-control, to meet whatsoever may come to us, so as to honour the Lord whom we serve. And then, half anxiously, lest Timothy's

¹ 2 Tim. i. 3, 4.

³ Ibid. i. 6.

² Ibid. i. 5.

⁴ Ibid. i. 7.

gentler nature might wince, if the persecutor's lash descended,—or, as if he had feared in Timothy, whose “tears” fell so freely, some lack of that iron purpose which makes the tenderest turn into heroes when the combat thickens,—St. Paul appeals to him not to be “ashamed” of the testimony of the Lord Jesus, nor of his “Prisoner” at Rome, poor and despised though he be; but to take his share in suffering whatever hardship may accompany the preaching of the glorious Gospel; and to endure all things in “the power of God”¹—that power which has saved us from Sin and Hell, and will certainly deliver us from mere Earthly ills!

(b) But what is there, then, in this Gospel of God, or in the Christ of the Gospel, so to brace and sustain any shrinking soul? Two things, very specifically, exclaims St. Paul in reply:—

(1) The eternal “purpose and grace” of God the Father, before all worlds and ages, to “save” us, and “call”² us with a holy calling, in and through Christ Jesus; and—

(2) The “Appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus,” Who “abolished” Death, and “brought Life and Incorruption to light”³ through the Gospel.

Now, it is in accordance with this Divine and

¹ 2 Tim. i. 8. .

² Ibid. i. 9.

³ Ibid. i. 10.

Eternal Purpose of God the Father, and "not according to our works," that in the Gospel we have been called with a holy calling; and it is in, and through, this Glorious Gospel, whereunto St. Paul was "appointed a Preacher and an Apostle and a Teacher,"¹ that Christ's victory over Death, and His flinging of light on the Life Incorruptible, are now being made manifest to all the world. These things may bring, and do bring, "sufferings"; yea, death itself may be in the cup that the Heralds of Heaven have to drink;—suffering often, but "Shame" never! For the Apostle knows better "in Whom" he has believed, and protests fearlessly, in face of men and devils, that Jesus his Lord and King can and will "guard" through Time and Eternity "that which has been committed unto Him."²

Remember, then, that this quenchless and triumphant Spirit fed itself on two facts,—one, the Eternal Love of the Father,—the other, the Abolition of Death by the Son of God. And when we think what the latter of these two can mean—how Jesus abolished Death, bereft it of its sting, rescued men from its fear, and destroyed its power—we find ourselves once more in presence of the empty Sepulchre, we see the Rising Redeemer, we peer through the cleft

¹ 2 Tim. i. 11.² Ibid. i. 12.

Heavens into which He passes to the Father, and through which there pours down ever since a flood of light on "Life and Immortality" for Man. There is Life, in and through living union to this living and life-giving Lord,—Life Eternal, Life Incorruptible, like His own blessed Life. In that one assurance, *Sealed to us by His Resurrection from the Dead*, there is a fountain of strength almighty for every believing Soul;—strength to endure, as seeing Him Who is invisible; strength to triumph over all Earthly ills, yea, over Death itself; strength to climb up to the Father, whither Jesus Himself has gone.

Does any gentle and shrinking spirit, like Timothy, hear these words to-day? Quails your nerve before the torture and the scorn of an Infidel environment? Be not ashamed, then, of the testimony of your Lord! Testify to the facts of His Incarnation, Earthly Life, Atoning Sacrifice, Resurrection and Ascension to God; bear witness to them as true in history, and proved true in your own experience of their saving power. Proclaim your immovable faith in this Holy Gospel with its Glad Tidings regarding God and His Son. Teach these facts, preach them, do battle for them, as enshrining the Truth as it is in Jesus. And, thus showing yourself not to be ashamed of "the testimony" of our Lord,

He in response will flood your soul with His Heavenly light. He will abolish Death for you, by depriving it of all its terrors and of every sting. He will raise you victorious from the arms of Dissolution itself, and crown you with the garland of a Life Immortal and Incorruptible.

By these two facts—one, that man knows and sees; the other, that God alone reveals—one on the Human plane, the other on the Heavenly—viz., the Resurrection of Jesus from the Dead, and the Eternal Purpose of God's Love and Grace—Timothy the Gentle rises up into fellowship with Paul the Heroic, and can say like him: "I know Whom I have believed." Jesus is risen! Death is abolished!

In closing this the Fourth Section of our Biblical study, and looking back on St. Paul's teaching and life as exhibited in his Later Epistles, and towards the approaching end of his days of noble service and suffering,—whether in his Ephesian *Encyclical*, his Philippian *Letter of Love*, his Colossian *Letter of Philosophy*, or his Timothean *Letter of Martyrdom*,—no candid student will hesitate to admit that the Resurrection-Note dominates all the music; and that the truest thing you can affirm, regarding the principles that ruled the life and the teaching of

Apostolic men and Apostolic days, is that they preached *Jesus and the Resurrection* ; and that they lived *the Resurrection-Life* ; the life that rises from, and that returns in loyalty unto, the risen and reigning Lord Jesus Christ. To get back to that is to get back to Apostolic life on this Earth. To reaffirm the Resurrection of Jesus, and to know its power, realising it as the great fact in our religious belief, and the quenchless flame at the heart of our religious experience,—till we see and serve our living Master and Lord at God's Right Hand, more really than we see and serve Man or Angel or Spirit—that is the Goal of Christianity ! Short of that, we are poor and miserable, blind and weak. But, reaching unto that, even consciously struggling to reach it, then the only limit to what we may become is the incalculable limit of *what it is possible for the Christ in us to attain*. The Crowns of Sainthood, of Apostolic Glory, of Martyr Blessedness, may all be reached by those brows that raise themselves out of the dust to Jesus, Risen and Reigning, with the utter and absolute submission implied in the adoring cry, "MY LORD AND MY GOD."

BOOK FIFTH

**THE PLACE AND VALUE OF THE RESURREC-
TION IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS**

BOOK FIFTH

THE PLACE AND VALUE OF THE RESURREC- TION IN THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

WE come now to one of the most remarkable books in the New Testament Scriptures. I have classed *The Epistle to the Hebrews* separately and anonymously, not that I at all admit that it has been satisfactorily established that St. Paul could not have written it; but merely because, out of respect to a great army of Biblical Scholars in all countries, its authorship must be treated as at least an open question. But there can scarcely be any fair dispute that it breathes the very spirit of St. Paul's teaching, that it is the *Jewish* complement to his *Gentile* Gospel, setting forth that as the Gentile Christian was not to be brought into bondage to Judaism, even so the Hebrew Christian was not to be bereft of anything that was permanently valuable in the Religion of his fathers. Its Spiritual Things were binding and abiding.

I.

True, their Temple of glory and of beauty had disappeared ; but the living Temple of the living God still remained ; in Consecrated Souls, and in the Holy Church which is the Body of Christ, God tabernacled upon Earth. The Priesthood of Aaron was, indeed, abolished ; but only because of the transcendent fact that the Everlasting High Priest of our Race had taken His place at God's right hand, there to make intercession for us. The Altars of Judaism were, doubtless, deserted and broken down, and their Sacrifices had become null and void ; but only because on the Cross—that Great Altar of Humanity—the Lamb of God had been once for all offered to take away the Sin of the World ; and because on the Throne in Heaven—the Golden Altar of Incense within the Veil—the merit of His Oblation, and the prayer of His Intercession, were for ever being lifted up to God for the Salvation of Men.

To the Writer of this Epistle, the *Hebrew Religion* was not abolished, though Rites and Sacrifices were ; it, on the contrary, was rather spiritualised and glorified. Christianity was the spiritual fruit, and the abiding crown, of the Old Testament faith and ordinances. Jesus had,

properly speaking, taken nothing away, but divinely "fulfilled" everything; that is to say, nothing had been "destroyed"—it had only evolved itself, or rather, it had been evolved by the impact of a new and Divine force, into something fuller, truer, more spiritual—into that perfect flower and glorious fruit, of which it was but the budding promise. Its glory had ceased, only because it was swallowed up into the Glory that excelleth !

Let the Hebrew Convert to Christianity, therefore, grasp this grand and transforming thought; let him but see it clearly, glowing before his soul, and he shall for ever be free from any temptation to fall away from the Spiritual Religion of Jesus, and return to the beggarly elements of Mosaism. This is the main motive that fires the brain and heart of the Author of the Epistle—admitting the Glory of the Jewish Religion, but showing how it passes into, and is transformed by the Glory of the Christian Religion, a glory borrowed from its Divine Founder, which can never be excelled, and which never can pass away.

II.

We take up, then, this *Apologia*—the first of a long and not ignoble series, laid at the feet of

Jesus—and we eagerly inquire—Did this Writer find it advisable or necessary to trouble them with those Resurrection-ideas so characteristic of the other New Testament teachers? Since some very learned men have failed to discover any idea of Resurrection or Immortality at all amongst the teachings of Old Testament Lawgivers, Psalmists, and Prophets—could not this Author, so intensely anxious to disabuse the Hebrews of every prejudice against Christianity, have managed to present his plea for the Religion of Jesus, without bringing into the forefront such a stumbling-block as His Resurrection from among the Dead?

We shall omit from our review the *indirect* reply to such a question, which, however, is by far the strongest of all—viz., that the very framework of the book takes for granted, as indisputable fact, that the once Crucified but now Risen Man of Calvary is at God's Right Hand for us, that the whole argument of the Apologia is baseless if that be not true; and we shall rather content ourselves with a patient perusal of the work to find out whether any teaching therein is directly and expressly founded upon the Resurrection of Jesus from among the Dead.

III.

(a) We find, then, the Author laying his argument broad and deep in the opening Chapters ; that the Religion of Jesus is more glorious than that of the Old Testament, because its founder is the very Son of God—the “Heir of All Things,” by the Word of His Power “upholding All Things”—Who is higher than the Angels, higher than Moses, higher than all earthly Priests, being the one eternal High Priest, by Himself* “purging our Sins,” and thereafter “sitting down on the Right Hand of the Majesty on high.”¹ He meets one rooted Jewish prejudice by setting forth the true Sonship of Jesus, in the *first* Chapter—as the “First Born,” and yet also as “Lord” and “God,”² the Incarnation of the Father. He meets another, and even more bitter prejudice, in the *second* Chapter,—by setting forth Jesus as made “lower than the Angels” for a season—as being made “perfect through sufferings,” as “tasting death for every man,”—that in all things He might be “made like unto His brethren,” and so might be a merciful and faithful High Priest ;—the “Suffering” Saviour, who Himself hath been sorely tempted, and is therefore “able to succour them that are tempted.”³

¹ Heb. i. 1-3. ² Ibid. i. 6, 8, 10. ³ Ibid. ii. 9, 10, 17, 18.

Now, the central thought, amid all this comforting and exalting doctrine, is—that Jesus became Partaker of our Flesh and Blood, that, “through Death,” He might “bring to nought” him that had the power of Death, that is, the Devil ; and might “deliver” all them who through “fear of Death” are all their lifetime “subject to bondage.”¹

Well, but how did Jesus accomplish all this ? By dying ? Surely not merely by dying ! Nay rather, by rising again from among the Dead. When He died, the Empire of Death seemed to be more absolute than ever, so long as He was still lying in Joseph’s Tomb. It was the Resurrection that brought to nothing him that had the power of Death, that destroyed the power of Satan. It was the Resurrection that took away the sting from dying, and robbed the Grave of its victory. It was the Resurrection that released men for ever from the fear and the bondage of Death ; and that enables the dying now to fall asleep on the bosom of Christ, in the sure and blessed hope of a Glorious Immortality.

So, then, the Cycle of Thought, now at last complete, runs thus, and shows the transcendent superiority of Christianity to Hebraism, and at the same time to every other conceivable form of

¹ Heb. ii. 14, 15.

Religion—*first*, the Son of God Himself, Incarnated,—*second*, the Messiah, Suffering and Atoning for Sin,—and *third*, the Saviour of Mankind, Risen from among the Dead, and Reigning in the Heavens. Moreover, it needs no stress of brain to perceive that the Resurrection of Jesus from among the Dead is once more the Crowning Truth that garlands all the rest ; that Incarnation, and Atonement, and everything else, would be vain, if there be not, over all, a risen and living Lord and Master, under Whom, and unto Whom, we may lead the Resurrection-Life. We go on our way, looking unto Jesus ; Who, once, made a little lower than the Angels for a season that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man, now, for the suffering of death, is crowned with glory and honour, because He triumphed over it, and carried away the Keys of Hades, and wears them for ever at His girdle,—having opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all Believers.

Subject to bondage, through fear of Death, all their lifetime,—if there be any such amongst us now, let them rise up and shout, Hallelujah ! The Empire of Death is destroyed. The power of Satan over the Dying is for ever broken. They no longer die, under the sting of Sin ; they fall asleep in the arms of Jesus, and awake in glory ! The risen Lord hath abolished Death, and hath

enthroned His own blessed Sleep in the realms of Hades. Why should any Christian fear to die, any more than the Child to fall asleep at night, that is being crooned to rest in its mother's arms? "When I awake" out of that long Sleep, I am "still with Thee"; and I have all along been with Thee, my Lord, my Father.

(b) The author, at the end of the *fourth* Chapter, finds himself face to face with the great theme of his Epistle—the High Priesthood of Jesus in the Heavens; and so he announces it, and the Spiritual Lesson he means to enforce, in these lofty words: "Having, then, a Great High Priest, who hath passed through the Heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our Confession."¹ And, in the *fifth* Chapter, he dilates on the Divine qualifications of the Great High Priest;—Who "taketh" not this honour unto Himself, but is "called of God," and is "appointed for men"² in things pertaining to God; Who can "bear gently with the ignorant and erring," for, "though He was a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered" in the days of His Flesh, offering up "prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears";³ and Who, finally, having been "made perfect," having realised in Himself God's Ideal of Humanity,

¹ Heb. iv. 14.

² Ibid. v. 1, 4.

³ Ibid. v. 2, 7, 8.

became the Head of the New Creation, and, "unto all them that obey Him, the Author of Eternal Salvation," being named of God a High Priest "after the Order of Melchizedek" ¹—King of Righteousness, and, therefore also, King of Peace. And all this leads up to the emphatic word—"Wherefore"—followed by the emphatic and appropriate counsel—"Let us cease to speak of the first principles of Christ, and press on unto perfection"; that is, to "full growth," to manhood in our Religion. Leaving the beginnings, let us go on unto the superstructure of grace and glory; not laying again "a foundation," not arguing over and over again the "First Principles," ² but producing the mature fruits of Faith and Hope and Love.

Now, then, let us see what the Sacred Author includes in these *First Principles*." What are those Doctrines of Christ, those Postulates of our Religion, which like the Postulates of Euclid, must be taken for granted, else all further thinking among Christian men is foreclosed, all reasoning about Christianity becomes impossible? And, particularly, let us inquire whether the Resurrection-Idea be one of these; whether that is a First Principle, an elementary and indispensable truth, in the Religion of Jesus?

¹ Heb. v. 9, 10.

² Ibid. vi. 1.

The PRINCIPIA of Christianity are here then presented to us in three memorable Pairs; *two*, laid within the Soul itself,—“Repentance from dead works,” and “Faith toward God”; *two*, laid within the Church and administered there,—“Baptisms,” and “Laying on of Hands”; and *two*, laid beyond the Veil and within the Invisible World,—“Resurrection of the Dead,” and “Eternal Judgment.”¹ These are the First Principles of the Faith, which we as Christians are called upon to cease discussing at all, or laying their foundations again; we are to leave all that behind, and treat these things as unquestioned and unquestionable *Postulates* amongst the followers of Jesus;—on which taking our stand, as on the basal rocks of the Universe, we are to begin climbing up and on towards perfection. “And this,” says the inspired Writer, “this will we do, if God permit,”² if God spare us. The emphasis of Death and Eternity lies upon the words; as much as to say, that any other way of living would be mere waste of life, for a Christian man!

But the “Resurrection of the Dead,” thus boldly declared, would be a mere Speculation, instead of a First Principle and a Postulate of our Religion, were it not for the historical fact of the

¹ Heb. vi. 1, 2.

² Ibid. vi. 3.

Rising of Jesus "from," or rather, "from among" the Dead. Therefore, explicitly, though silently, all the glory and wonder of this scene can be beheld only by those who discern the light that streams into and out of the empty Sepulchre,—only in the presence of the risen and reigning Lord and Saviour of the World. No Resurrection of Jesus would mean the falling back into dust of all the other "foundations" of our Religion! Repentance and Faith, Baptism and Laying on of Hands,—what are they, if there be no living Redeemer on the Throne, and at the Altar, in the Heavens? Eternal Judgment—what is that, if there be no Resurrection, no Risen and Ascended Son of Man, Who shall judge the Quick and the Dead?

Do I appeal to any Soul, that yearns to leave behind these First Principles, and to go on unto Perfection—unto the fulness of all Manhood that is possible for us in Christ Jesus? Then, remember that the "foundations" on which you are to build, if you would rise to the Heavenly Life, must have, for one vast corner-stone, this doctrine of The Resurrection of the Dead; and that, not as a *hope* merely, or a splendid human guess; nay, not even as a bare *revelation* on the mere authority of the Word of God, but as a *fact* exemplified in the Resurrection of Jesus from

among the Dead, and as a pledge therein conveyed that all, who sleep in Jesus, God will raise together with Him in the Day of Glory and of Power. Apart from that Foundation-Corner-Stone, the Resurrection-Life cannot be built up by any human being on this Earth ; and without that Resurrection-Life there is no going on unto "Perfection" possible for the Soul of Man.

It remains, therefore, for ever an indisputable Postulate, in the realms alike of Grace and of Glory—there *was* the Resurrection of Jesus, and there *will be* the Resurrection of the Dead.

BOOK SIXTH

THE PLACE AND VALUE OF THE RESURREC-
TION IN THE FIRST EPISTLE OF ST. PETER

BOOK SIXTH

THE PLACE AND VALUE OF THE RESURREC- TION IN THE FIRST EPISTLE OF ST. PETER

HAVING completed our review of the Writings of St. Paul, and of the Writing of one closely allied to him, if not actually himself—the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews—we now find ourselves face to face with the testimony of St. Peter, in his *First Epistle*, one of the most unquestioned and unquestionable documents in the New Testament volume.

I.

Doubts have been thrown, and may continue to be alleged, with some show of reason, against the “Second” Epistle that bears his name ; but it is not supercilious to say that the blinded Criticism, which assails the genuineness of the “First” Epistle, ought to be silently ignored.

A so-called "opinion," that supplants historical evidence—a light from within, that overrides all external witness—has no claim to any better treatment than ignominious neglect.

We lift, then, this authentic and genuine product of Simon, the Son of Jonas ; and, recalling all that he was in the innermost School of Christ, and all that he was privileged to do, as the First of the Apostles to open the Door of the Kingdom alike to Gentile and to Jew,—weighing at the same time all that he has been, by his personality, and by his testimony, to the whole of Christendom ever since,—we anxiously submit our problem to this judgment :—*What place had the Resurrection of Jesus in St. Peter's teaching and life ?* And, what use did he make of it in proclaiming the Gospel, and enforcing its lessons on those to whom he wrote—the Elect, the Sojourners of the Dispersion ?

II.

Gazing into the opening verses, and scanning the places where these Sojourners dwelt—Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, Bithynia—we begin to perceive that St. Peter is addressing Converts, in the very regions that had been Evangelised by St. Paul in his great Missionary journeys. And why, specifically, these ? We read still further,

and we find a People on the very eve, or already in the midst, of a great fight of affliction ;—summoned already, or about to be summoned, to pass through a fiery furnace of trial ;—and sorely needing, therefore, to be braced for, or comforted under, death by persecution, or whatever else might come to them for the Name of Christ.

Now, this exactly corresponds with the state of affairs throughout Asia Minor, when St. Paul was lying in chains at Rome, and when the popular hatred was rising, against Christianity, amongst those whose Craft was endangered ; a tide of Revenge that made it possible for Nero to launch his fiendish and deadly decrees against all who bore the name of Jesus. It may well, therefore, be called **THE LETTER OF CONSOLATION** ; containing an Apostolic presentation of all the highest conceivable motives, that can quicken and raise up the Followers of Jesus to conquer every Earthly suffering, and to win the Crown of Life. This, then, is the New Testament “Portion for the Day of Trial,” the Letter of Consolation for all afflicted and persecuted Souls ; and it has proved itself, through all the Ages since, to be a Covert from the Storms of Life, a refuge for all the Sons and Daughters of Affliction.

III.

(a) Behold, in the very forefront of all consoling truths and inspiring motives, how St. Peter places what he calls "a living hope,"—a hope, that is, which is "lively" and "life giving." To this, we have been "begotten again" by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to His great mercy; the hope, namely, of "an Inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away";—an Inheritance, "reserved in Heaven for you, who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto Salvation"; a Salvation "ready to be revealed in the last time";¹ that is, to be fully manifested when Christ Who is our life shall appear and we also shall appear with Him in Glory.

Now every Christian at once feels and admits that, where this "Living Hope" takes full possession of the human Soul, there enters into that Soul a power of endurance and of victory—in presence of which, Persecution is nothing, Death is nothing, the Gates of Hell are despised, and that Soul can do, can be, whatever the Christ in Man can be or can do. *That is the Apostle's philosophy of Martyrdom*; and all other attempts to explain the Martyr's triumph—from the glow

¹ 1 Pet. i. 3-6.

on Stephen's face, down through the Ages, till the Psalm of the Covenanter amidst the flames—must ever fall lamentably short of the mark. The Martyr sees the Coming Glory with his Lord ; and his Soul shines with the approaching splendour.

But, right in the heart of all this light and glory, flashes forth that most precious Truth which our eyes are following and tracing through all the New Testament. How have we been begotten by God to this Living Hope ? Whence has it sprung ? There comes the unwavering response from St. Peter—"The Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead." Despair sat like nightmare on the heart of the Ancient World. The Dead went out—went from us—we saw not whither ; and men wondered if they could ever return. The withered tree might spring again ; "but man dieth—and where is he ?" cried the distracted spirit of Job, echoing the doubts and questionings of the whole Human Race. Yea, Despair came down, robed in triple darkness, and sat enthroned on the Tomb Stone of Jesus Crucified, during two dread nights and one awful day ; and it seemed as if God had forsaken Man, and as if this Earth had been built only as a Vestibule for Hell !

Hark ! what sound is that ? It is the rustling

of the wings of Eternal Hope, rising with the Risen Christ ! Hark yet again !—what other sound is that ? It is the rustling of the wings of black Despair, fleeing with all her demon birds back to Hell, and resigning this ransomed Earth to the reign of blessed Hope ;—a hope that springs out of the empty Tomb of Jesus, and that will never again forsake us utterly, till it places us beside Himself in the glory of the Father.

Begotten again unto a lively hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the Dead—so runs one of the briefest and most pregnant descriptions, at once of the new Life and the new Teaching, that characterised Apostolic men and Apostolic days. If we want to win the world back to that life, we must begin again where the Holy Apostles of the Lord began ;—we must kindle the same great and blessed Hope, upon the Altar of the Soul, by seeing the rising Christ ascending from the empty Tomb to the Heavenly Throne. If we desire to lead our own Souls deeper and deeper into the secret of the Heroes and Saints and Martyrs of the Cross, let us refresh ourselves every day at this Well of God, the fountain of Eternal Hope ; not a hope generated by us, or by our fellows ; but the “lively hope,” begotten within us by our God and Father, through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from among the Dead.

(b) Side by side with this towering and triumphant hope, there falls on us, in the immediately succeeding verses, the somewhat startling and most unexpected counsel—"Pass the time of your sojourning in fear";¹ and there clusters around that counsel some very beautiful teaching, grandly illuminative of our theme; to which we now call your attention, in order that it may be shown that this *Holy Fear* is but the pathway to realms of transcendent Faith and quenchless Hope.

He has been exhorting them, in view of Prophets and Evangelists and watching Angels, to "gird up the loins of their mind," to be "self-possessed," and to "hope to the end"; *i.e.*, "perfectly,"² or "to the death," as we might say; and to remember that all this is possible only by a life of holy obedience—"not fashioning themselves according to their former lusts, in the times of their ignorance," but, as He who hath called them is holy, so were they to be holy "in all manner of living."³ And now comes the argument that is to enforce all such appeals; for the Christian teacher ever seeks to justify himself at the Bar of the Understanding, as well as in the Court of Faith, that he may at once pierce the

¹ 1 Pet. i. 17.

² Ibid. i. 13.

³ Ibid. i. 15.

Conscience, enlighten the Intellect, stir the Emotions, and subdue the Will.

It is, therefore, in this connection that the Counsel of *Godly Fear* is addressed to the Sojourners of the Dispersion, and is supported by two main lines of thought—namely, Pass your time in Holy Fear, (1) because God, on whose Name we call as Father, “without respect of persons judgeth according to each man’s work”;¹ and (2) because we have “not been redeemed with corruptible things,” with silver or gold, but “with precious blood, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot, even the Blood of Christ.”² *The Holy Judgment of God the Father—the precious Redeeming Blood of Jesus the Saviour*—these are the main motives that should inspire us all, as Pilgrims and Strangers, to pass our time in godly fear. We have been redeemed from our sins by so great a price—the Life Blood of Jesus; therefore we are not our own, but are bound to glorify Him who hath called us by body and by spirit which are His. Further, we are all going to the Judgment-seat of God, where there is no respect of persons, and where all works are weighed in scales of eternal Righteousness; therefore, the highest Wisdom is but another name for Godly Fear; and such Fear

¹ 1 Pet. i. 17.

² Ibid. i. 18, 19.

is most closely allied to perfect Love—it is, in fact, Holy Obedience.

But how can we be assured of all this? What, if your teaching of final Judgment be but the figment of a diseased Imagination? What, if all your pretty talk about a Lamb without blemish, and about precious redeeming Blood, be but poetic fancy, wherewith you try to sooth the wounded conscience and buy off the demons of remorse? Where is the ground for your assurance? Is there any rational ground for assurance at all? On what standeth your Faith?

Now, in answer to this challenge, what would *you* say? Would you begin with some vague, far-away, and speculative reasoning, circling round and round the regions of Theology, and embracing a whole library of investigation, and a highly developed process of intellectual discussion? Exactly thus, you would lose your own soul's peace and life, and you would certainly and utterly fail to win or to console your fellow-creatures. Listen! and learn from this Apostle, how Faith and Hope must "stand in God" and not in Man.

First of all, he proclaims what only God could have made known, and what must be received, if believed at all, exclusively on Divine authority:—that Christ, as the Lamb of God, who was to take

away Sin by the shedding of His own precious Blood, "was foreknown from before the foundation of the world."¹ That was the counsel of the Eternal Father's love—out of which alone all else in Redemption takes its rise ; and for which, to God only be glory for ever and ever.

Secondly, the Apostle proceeds thereafter to facts of knowledge and experience, which are the outcome and the complement of the Father's eternal love ; and so he bases their faith and hope on no mere *Speculations* of the mind of man, nor even exclusively upon any alleged *Revelation* out of the Heavens, but upon the solid rock of what had been seen and heard and testified unto them ; viz., that the Christ, having been "manifested at the end of the Times" for our sake, God at length "raised Him from the dead," and "gave Him glory" in the Heavenly Places—God did this, whereof Men were witnesses, so that in believing the Resurrection we are "believers in God," Who raised Jesus from the Tomb to the Heavenly Throne. Hence, the purpose of the Resurrection is literally and spiritually fulfilled ; namely, "that your faith and hope might be in God."² God Himself is our authority for this faith, and for the sure and blessed hope of a happy Resurrection. The faith

¹ 1 Pet. i. 20.

² Ibid. i. 20, 21.

and hope of the Christian stand in God—and can acknowledge in these matters no other basis—God, Who raised Jesus from among the Dead and gave Him Glory!

So that your faith and hope might be in God— that was the theory, if I may so adopt human terms to Divine transactions, on which all these events proceeded out of Eternity, and have been executed down to these latest times. Think how this perfervid Apostle would have thrust back, almost with scorn, any suggestion that the faith and hope of Christendom might be based on anything less, or anything else, than what God Himself is, and what God Himself has done, before the eyes of men! Articles here and Confessions there, Creeds in one country and Catechisms in another, holy Men of one age and holy Books of another—he crushes them all out of view, with a gesture of eloquent impatience, and protests that our faith and hope stand in God!

And, ultimately, if you will but let yourselves think it out, this kind of faith and hope alone builds up those types of character who can suffer, and, if need be, die for Religion, and whose sole motto is—We ought to obey God rather than man! They accept the testimony of God regarding His Son. They enter into abiding

communion with the Saviour Himself, risen and now reigning in the Heavens. For these men and women, life and death and all things became gloriously transfigured. Their faith and hope stand only in God—Glory be to His blessed Name !

(c) Such being the privileges, and such the condition of Christians—"begotten again" unto a lively hope by the Resurrection of Jesus from the Dead ; and "redeemed," not with corruptible things, but with the precious Blood of Christ—manifested in these last times by God who raised Him from the Dead and gave Him glory—the Apostle bases thereon his great appeal, "Love one another from the heart fervently" ;¹ that is, as in many ancient authorities, "with a pure heart," or, "from a clean heart."

And so we are here taught again, as elsewhere in all the New Testament writings, that the loftiest and most mysterious doctrines of Christianity are peculiarly fitted, as well as expressly designed, to enforce the most practical forms of Godliness, that this Earth has ever seen or can ever see. For instance, from such teaching there flows the imperative duty of "putting away all wickedness and all guile and hypocrisies and envies and all evil-speaking,"

¹ 1 Pet. i. 22.

and of "longing for the spiritual milk, which is without guile,"¹ that we may thereby grow unto Salvation. From such teaching, also, flows the ennobling thought, that Christians are "an Elect Race, a Royal Priesthood, a Holy Nation, a People for God's own possession";² to show forth the praises of Him, Who hath called us out of Darkness into His marvellous Light. And all this is to be accomplished in ways such as these, *e.g.*—by abstaining from "fleshly lusts, which war against the Soul"; by your behaviour being "seemly among the Gentiles,"³ that they may, by your good works which they behold, glorify God in the day of visitation; by being "subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake," that by well-doing ye should put to "silence the ignorance of foolish men";⁴ and, finally, by being "free, and yet not using your freedom for a cloak of wickedness, but as bond-servants of God."⁵

In one word, the teaching that rises out of the Resurrection-Appeal finds its crown in the enforcement of every practical responsibility that we are under to God our Father or to Men our Brothers—"Honour all Men. Love the Brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the King."⁶

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2.

² Ibid. ii. 9.

³ Ibid. ii. 11, 12.

⁴ Ibid. ii. 13, 15.

⁵ Ibid. ii. 16.

⁶ Ibid. ii. 17.

Nay, closer yet comes the appeal, and, if that be possible, more practical ; and all still based on these same ideas about the suffering, risen, and reigning Jesus. Servants are to be "subject to their own Masters," even to the extent of "suffering wrongfully and enduring grief" ; because "Christ also suffered" for us, "leaving us an example"¹ that we should follow His steps. Wives are to be "subject to their own Husbands," that they may win them by their "chaste behaviour coupled with fear," and by their "adorning" of the hidden man of the heart "in the incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."² Husbands, in like manner, are to "dwell with their Wives according to knowledge" ; as being "joint-heirs of the grace of life," to the end "that their prayers be not hindered" ;³ as sojourners and strangers on this Earth, and fellow-pilgrims to the Eternal Home of the risen Lord

Having thus swept in all the relationships and duties of Christian men into the Gospel net ; or rather, to vary the idea, having tried to link them all on to the Cross of Christ, who in everything hath set us an example that we should walk in His steps, the Apostle enters on that field of

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 18, 21.

² Ibid. iii. 1-4.

³ Ibid. iii. 7.

thought, which specially engages our present study, by wheeling back on the grand opening appeal for unfeigned love, and exclaiming: "Finally, be ye all like-minded, compassionate, loving as brethren, tender-hearted, humble-minded." ¹

This is the Christ-life in the Soul of man ; and this life is to be followed, to be cultivated, as in itself "good" ; for hereunto have Christians been "called," that they should "inherit a blessing." ² Nothing, after all, can really harm the man that leads the Christ-life, and cherishes the Christ-spirit ; the man that "sanctifies Christ as Lord in his heart," and is "ready always to give a reason concerning the hope that is in him, yet with meekness and fear." ³ For that man has "a good conscience within," and a "good manner of life in Christ" ; ⁴ and, if God so will that he has to suffer, "better that he suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing" ; ⁵ for so he shall be sustained by the sympathy and by the example of Jesus Christ ; "Who suffered for sins once, the Righteous for the unrighteous that He might bring us to God ; being put to death in the Flesh, but quickened in the Spirit" ; ⁶ and Who is now "on the Right Hand of God, having gone into

¹ 1 Pet. iii. 8.

² Ibid. iii. 9, 13.

³ Ibid. iii. 15.

⁴ Ibid. iii. 16.

⁵ Ibid. iii. 17.

⁶ Ibid. iii. 18.

Heaven—Angels and Authorities and Powers being made subject unto Him.”¹

Yea, forasmuch as our Lord and Saviour thus suffered in the Flesh, though now quickened and glorified, therefore we are to “arm ourselves also with the same mind”; not to think it strange “concerning the fiery trial which cometh to prove us,” but to “rejoice as partakers of Christ’s sufferings”; that, at the revelation of His glory, we also “may rejoice with exceeding joy.” Nay, to sum up all in one single glorious thought—“If ye are reproached for the Name of Christ, blessed are ye; because the Spirit of Glory, and the Spirit of God, resteth upon you.”²

This, then, is the Divine Philosophy of the Perseverance of the Saints, the Endurance of the Martyrs, the patience and victory of all Heroes of the Cross;—this is the Spirit of the Men and Women who quenched the violence of fire, and were more than Conquerors over all Earthly ill, and over Death itself. *It is the Christ-Spirit in the Soul of Man*; enabling us, who are His followers, to bear suffering as Jesus bore it for us; and, by our absolute surrender to the Father’s Will to win a perfect victory, even in the Act of Submission to Death, the moment of apparent defeat.

¹ 1 Pet. iii. 22.

² Ibid. iv. 12, 13, 14.

IV.

Now, it is barely possible that some superficial student may surmise that this long analysis has borne us far away from our Resurrection-theme. We turn back, therefore, on the field surveyed, to show—(1) That the Christ, put to death in Flesh, but quickened in Spirit, Who went and “preached to the Spirits in prison,” is the Christ Who “suffered for us”¹ that He might bring us unto God; and who “rose again from the Dead,” that He might lead us into the Resurrection-Life; and (2) that our Baptism, symbolised by water, sets forth not only “the putting away of the filth of the Flesh,” but the cleansing also of the Inner Man, that we may have “the interrogation of a good conscience toward God”; and all this “through,” or “by, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.”² That is to say, our very Salvation is hinged upon the rising again of our Saviour out of His Tomb, and ascending into the Heavens to sit on the Right Hand of God. The Dying, the Quickening, the Rising, and the Ascension of Jesus as heretofore, dominate once more all the field of Apostolic teaching, and are the only footpath to all these heights and glories of Apostolic living. With the Christ Risen and Reigning, all these

¹ 1 Pet. iii. 18, 19.² Ibid. iii. 21.

are possible. With a Dead Christ at the heart of our Religion, not only do we fall back from these mountain-peaks of Faith, but we faint and perish even in the lowly paths of Duty and of Trial.

Twice, here, the Veil is thrown aside, and a light flashes on the World Beyond ; and, either time, the splendour blazes around Jesus. Once, He is visiting the Realms of Hades, Himself a disembodied Spirit, and preaching there to disembodied Spirits, while His own Body lay resting in the Tomb of Joseph. The other time, He is ascended into the Heavens, seated on the Right Hand of God, and receiving obeisance from all Angels, Principalities and Powers, as the Risen and Glorified Son of Man.

(a) As we see Jesus, for one whole day and two nights in *Hades*, the intermediate State, where the Souls of men await the Resurrection of their Bodies, He is surrounded by a great cloud of Spirits ;—the Souls of men who cherished faith and hope and love through the dim ages from Creation to Calvary, and that now are to have the Mystery of God revealed to them by the Soul of Christ Himself. And we begin to understand something of what St. Peter means, when he nakedly declares, in the following Chapter, “For unto this end was the Gospel preached even to the Dead, that they might be judged according to

men in the Flesh, but live according to God in the Spirit."¹

We repeat, with all sacred emphasis, the words—*The Gospel was preached even to the Dead*. We note the instance that is given—"the Spirits in Prison,"² which aforetime were disobedient in the days of Noah; that is, the Spirits of those who perished in the Flood. We must not dogmatise; we need not vainly guess; but we may reverently affirm, that the Son of Man is capable of reaching and influencing the Souls of men, on yon side of the Veil as well as on this; and *that*, in a degree, and by means infinitely beyond anything that Science or Faith can either dream or discover!

The horrible invention of a PURGATORY, from which Man's enlightened Conscience revolts, and which the Word of God renders absolutely incredible, has produced a violent reaction in modern minds; whereby even the idea of Hades, —the Scriptural idea of an Intermediate State, where departed Spirits await the Resurrection of their Bodies—is rudely blotted out. And so one of the grandest and most fruitful periods of man's education for Eternity is an utter blank in the thoughts of most of us. But we refuse to be robbed of what the Holy Ghost saith, whether by

¹ 1 Pet. iv. 6.

² Ibid. iii. 19.

the abuses of Romish excess, or by the violence of Protestant reaction. We hold to the teaching of Holy Scripture, whatever may be the peril to a narrow and a Sectarian type of Orthodoxy. There is no Purgatory, but there *is* an Intermediate State. And the only glimpse we get into that World Unseen (Hades) reveals to us the Spirit of Jesus proclaiming His Gospel unto the Dead. Beyond that, nothing can be known, for nothing has been revealed !

What comfort in his own soul, what hope for others, any man can draw therefrom let him do so, under responsibility to his own Lord and Master. But no one is justified in proclaiming his own inferences, or lessons, as if they were on the same level of authority as the Revealed Truth from God. The Revealed Truth on this subject begins and ends with the one glorious fact—that Jesus not only went to the Grave in His body, but went to the realms of Hades in His Spirit, *and there preached the Gospel to the Dead*. Here let our authoritative teaching regarding the matter begin and end,—flooding all the World of Hades with the light of the Saviour's presence and the music of His blessed voice. We no longer speak of the Spirits *in prison* as if they were there under penalty ; but rather we speak of them as Spirits *in safe-keeping*,—in the “custody” of the Lord—

for that is what the Greek term really implies. They are there in the consciousness of His presence, and under the mighty spell of His teaching. Rejoice, O ye Spirits of the Dead ! The Christ Himself has been with you—is with you now by His Spirit—and shall return to you again to claim you as His Own, and to present you, in your Resurrection bodies, to the Father in the Heavens, made like unto His own Glorified Self !

(b) When you have feasted your Soul on that revelation of the Christ in Hades, and have bowed your heads in praise for all that it reveals or suggests, lift your eyes once more, and gaze upwards ; for the Veil a second time is thrown aside, and now Christ, no longer in Hades, but in the HEAVENS,¹ is manifested to the adoring Spirit. No longer are we amongst disembodied Shades, or surrounded by Ghostly Presences, in the Intermediate State. We follow the Risen Christ. We see His glorified Human Form ascending into the Heavens. We behold the Lamb, as He had been slain, on the Right Hand of God. We hear all Angels and Authorities and Powers in the Universe rendering Divine Homage unto the Son of Man upon the Throne of God. And we know, by a certainty that is infallible,

¹ 1 Pet. iii. 22.

that we, who are united to Him by faith and love, shall be raised together with Christ ; and, being made like unto Him, when we see Him as He is, we shall share the glory of our Lord.

Our Baptism, our Inner Cleansing, and the interrogation of a Good Conscience, are the sign, the witness, and the proof of our Salvation ; but the guarantee, the pledge, the type of all therein implied, is the Resurrection of Jesus and His Ascension to the Glory of the Father. Let go that Resurrection, and not only will your own Hope of Immortality wane ; but also the Sacrament of "Baptism" will become a nullity ; the "putting away of the filth of the flesh" an impossibility ; and the answer of a "Good Conscience," before God, will be for ever beyond your reach.

BOOK SEVENTH

**THE PLACE AND VALUE OF THE RESUR-
RECTION IN THE APOCALYPSE**

BOOK SEVENTH

THE PLACE AND VALUE OF THE RESURRECTION IN THE APOCALYPSE

PURSUING our theme, and studiously seeking an answer from Holy Writ—as to the place and value of the Resurrection in the life and teaching of Apostolic men and Apostolic days—we come now to the last Book of the New Testament ; not necessarily, by any means, the latest in date of origin, but *the last in the order of thought*, as dealing with things that pertain to the latest evolutions of the Kingdom of God on Earth. It is our purpose to learn, by patient analysis and devout contemplation, whether, in the brain and heart of the Writer of the Apocalypse, the Resurrection of Jesus was or was not a vital factor ? And whether the Future, for Man and for the Universe, to which he looked forward was or was not built upon a Past that spoke of an empty

Sepulchre and a Present that looked to a risen and reigning Jesus, once buried, but now living in the Heavenly Places ?

I.

Here, however, we are met with a difficulty which nowhere else perplexed us in this investigation ; and that is the necessity of quoting nearly every sentence of the Book, if we mean to enforce and illustrate its teaching in full. For it is the Apocalypse of the Risen Lord. It is His Message from the Throne of the Heavens to His Church, or rather to His *Churches*, on Earth. If Jesus be not the risen and reigning Redeemer, the very conception of the Book is a fraud. So that His Resurrection must be presupposed before we begin to read at all ; for, if the Resurrection of Jesus be denied, this portion of the New Testament had better be buried at once ; as decently and quietly as you choose, but still hidden away once for all as a profane imposture.

Hence, it must prove to be for ever absolutely impossible to undermine the historical basis of Christianity, and yet, as some maintain, to perpetuate its ethical value. If the *facts* of the New Testament be not substantially what Apostolic men have presented to us in their writings, then

the *morals* of the New Testament are swept by the board. For Human Nature is so constituted that it cannot receive its Standard of Ethics from men who are proved to be unreliable as to matters of fact. If the Writer of this Book was mistaken, or was an Impostor, with reference to such an event as the Resurrection of Jesus, why should any one trust him, or care at all for his opinions as to Voices out of the Heavens, and Visions of the Future,—not to speak of his teachings as to duty and loyalty to the Christ here and now ?

We take the Book, meantime, for what it professes to be—a *Revelation* from Jesus Christ out of the Heavenly World. Accordingly, it is pre-eminently, and in a unique sense, the Book of the Resurrection ; the Revelation of the Mind and Will of the risen, reigning, and returning Saviour of Mankind. It comes to us through His Servant John, who bare witness of the Word of God and of the Testimony of Jesus Christ, even of all things that he saw. And it is accompanied by a special and distinctive Benediction ; which may we have the grace to attain !—"Blessed is he that readeth and they that hear . . . and keep the things which are written therein."¹

¹ Rev. i. 3.

II.

No reader can peruse the *Preface* to the *Epistles* for the *Seven Churches* without being startled by the strength and splendour of the language in which the message of "Grace and Peace" is announced. It is sent "from Him which is and which was and which is to come." It is sent "from the Seven Spirits which are before His Throne." But the crowning idea is reached in the third announcement. It is sent "from Jesus Christ, the Faithful Witness, the First Born of the Dead, and the Ruler of the Kings of the Earth."¹ It is beyond rational dispute, that the man into whose brain these ideas entered, and from whose pen these words flowed, about the "First Born of the Dead," was dominated by a Religion at whose centre stood the Lord Jesus Christ, the Risen and Reigning Redeemer, now glorified in the Heavens. So full was the writer of this glowing consciousness, that, having penned these words, he turns aside from his theme for a moment, and prostrates himself in an ascription of adoring praise—"Unto Him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by His blood (and He made us to be a Kingdom, to be Priests unto His God and

¹ Rev. i. 4, 5.

Father), to Him be the Glory and the Dominion for ever and ever. Amen." ¹

The man who brings himself to *doubt* the Resurrection of Jesus, will find his mind withdrawing more and more from all sympathy with the teaching of this Book ; while the unbelieving critic, who gets the length of *denying* the Resurrection of Jesus, will find himself driven, by the stinging lash of Revelation, from corner after corner in the Apocalypse, till he determines to hurl the whole Book aside as unworthy of a place in the Word of God. Accordingly, you can safely predict that the denial of the Resurrection will necessitate the rejection of the Apocalypse. If Christ Jesus the Lord be not Risen and Reigning, the Apocalypse is an intolerable, if not a fraudulent, production—a pretended Revelation from a man still sleeping in his grave !

III.

Then comes to St. John, their brother, and partaker with them in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus, the Great Voice as of a trumpet, and the Vision of the Golden Candlesticks. Now the Central object of all this glory is a Person ;—Whom John first

¹ Rev. i. 5, 6.

of all thought to be like unto the Son of Man, and Whom he describes in words that sparkle on the page with irrepressible splendour ; but before Whom, as he gazed on and began to realise that this was none other than his own Friend and Saviour, transcendently exalted and transfigured, he "fell at His feet as one dead,"¹ swooning away in wonder, in adoration, and in praise.

For the purpose, then, of our present study, two things must be remembered and thoughtfully weighed : (1) St. John's description of the Son of Man in the midst of the Golden Candlesticks ; and (2) the Son of Man's description of Himself to His Servant John.

(a) In the one case we have the loving Disciple portraying his glorified Lord,—the flowing garment, the golden girdle, the resplendent head, the flaming eye, the seven stars, the two-edged sword, and the Countenance like the Sun at noon ;²—but we never doubt, for one single instant, to Whom and to Whom alone all this must refer. John is gazing through love-illuminated eyes and through the dews of the Heavenly places, on the same Jesus on whose bosom he leaned in the Upper Room ; the same, yet not the same ; it is Jesus Risen, Jesus Glorified,

¹ Rev. i. 17.

² Ibid. i. 13.

Jesus Enthroned by the Father above every Name that is named ! It is plainly unthinkable, that any one could thus speak or write, who treated the Resurrection of the Son of Man as a fable or a dream, a fraud or an illusion ; at the best, a mere feat of imagination, or, at the worst, a collusive falsehood.

(b) At any rate, no sooner do we pass from St. John's description of the Saviour, and take up the words proclaimed by the Son of Man regarding Himself, than all possibility of doubt disappears ; and Christianity must stand or fall by the Resurrection-claims of the Christ Himself. He lays His hand in love and power on His prostrate and adoring Disciple, and commands him to banish all unworthy fear. He proclaims Himself to be "the First, and the Last, and the Living One." He declares that He once was "Dead," but is now "Alive for Evermore" ; and that He carries at His girdle "the Keys of Death and of Hades." ¹

Now, no human language can ever enhance the grandeur, the awful and beautiful glory, of the claims here made by the Son of Man for Himself. He has trodden the Valley of the Shadow. He has slept in the Tomb. He has gone through the Realms of Hades, and was

¹ Rev. i. 17, 18.

companion to the disembodied Spirits awaiting there. But He is now Alive, and Alive for Evermore, having risen in Body, and returned in Spirit, and ascended to the Father—as the immortal, incorruptible, and glorified Jesus. Nay more, He has carried away with Him the *Key of Death*—so that every one sleeping in the Grave, when he heareth the Call, shall arise and find an Open Door through which to follow his Lord. And He has carried away with Him the *Key of Hades*—so that every one waiting there amongst disembodied Spirits, when he heareth the Call, shall come forth by the Open Door and follow his Lord. The perfected Spirit shall be reunited to the resurrected Body—a body fitted for the life of the Spirit-World, no longer an animal body, but made like unto the resurrected body of Jesus, glorified, immortal, and incorruptible. And so the whole Person, the redeemed Personality of every Follower of Jesus, shall, like His Own glorious Person in the Heavenly Places, be alive, and shall live for evermore.

If Christ be not Risen and Reigning, all the glory falls down into dust and ashes at our feet. Nor can we console ourselves by muttering like some—*It is poetry!* It has a beautiful poetical significance! For, if there be no fact of reality,

no substantial truth underlying it all, we, for our part, can call it nothing but cruel trifling with the needs and the claims of Mankind in darkest and loneliest hours.

IV.

The same truth shines out upon us from the *Titles* assumed by Jesus, as well as from the *Promises* made by Jesus in each of the Seven Epistles, and very specially in the Epistle to Smyrna, the Martyr Church. In truth these wondrous and exalted claims are nothing short of blasphemous, if made on behalf of one who like the rest of mankind still lieth under the power of death and the grave. If such were ever spoken at all, they could only come from a Risen and Glorified Jesus.

(a) Hear these *Titles*, and ponder them till your heart burns within you :—

"These things saith He that holdeth the Seven Stars in His Right Hand, He that walketh in the midst of the seven golden Candlesticks" ;¹

"These things saith the First and the Last, which was dead and lived again" ;²

"These things saith He that hath the sharp two-edged Sword" ;³

"These things saith the Son of God, Who hath

¹ Rev. ii. 1.

² Ibid. ii. 8.

³ Ibid. ii. 12.

His eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like unto burnished brass";¹

"These things saith He that hath the Seven Spirits of God, and the Seven Stars";²

"These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the Key of David, He that openeth and none shall shut, and that shutteth and none openeth";³

"These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the Creation of God."⁴

(b) But more impressive still, if that were possible, are the *Promises* of blessing and of glory made in each of these Epistles to every faithful follower of the Lamb of God. Hear them now, and try to imagine what they can mean to you, if they are ascribed to one who has gone to his grave and lies there awaiting the Resurrection, like the other children of men :—

"To him that overcometh, to him will I give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the Paradise of God";⁵

"He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the Second Death";⁶

"To him that overcometh, to him will I give of the hidden Manna, and I will give him a white

¹ Rev. ii. 18.

² Ibid. iii. 1.

³ Ibid. iii. 7.

⁴ Ibid. iii. 14.

⁵ Ibid. ii. 7.

⁶ Ibid. ii. 11.

stone, and upon the stone a New Name written, which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it."¹

"He that overcometh, and he that keepeth My works unto the end, to him will I give authority over the Nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to shivers—as I also have received of My Father—and I will give him the Morning Star."²

"He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments; and I will in no wise blot his name out of the Book of Life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His Angels."³

"He that overcometh I will make him a Pillar in the Temple of My God, and he shall go out thence no more; and I will write upon him the Name of My God, and the name of the City of My God, the New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of Heaven from My God, and Mine own New Name";⁴

"He that overcometh I will give to him to sit down with Me in My Throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father in His Throne."⁵

(c) Now all these things are within the range even of Imagination only on the presupposition of the actual Rising of Jesus "out from among"

¹ Rev. ii. 17.

² Ibid. ii. 26-28.

³ Ibid. iii. 5.

⁴ Ibid. iii. 12.

⁵ Ibid. iii. 21.

the Dead. Grant that, and the whole field of vision for the faithful followers of the Christ is flooded from end to end with the light and glory of an unquenchable Hope. Deny that, and these transcendent Titles and these supernatural Promises all crash down into dust, and are buried beyond recall in the still sealed Sepulchre of Jesus of Nazareth. The Smyrna sufferer is bereft at a single stroke of that which alone could nerve him to endure as seeing Him who is invisible, and to win the fadeless Crown. In that case there is no Jesus, Who can truly say that He was dead and lives again ; there is no One who, having triumphed over Death and the Grave, has any right to give to the dying sufferer the pledge that his Soul shall never be hurt of the Second Death !

The writer of the Apocalypse, and every disciple in all the Seven Churches he addressed, feeling these things more keenly in the face of triumphant Heathendom than any of us in this day can possibly realise, filled his own soul, and filled theirs, with the truth—to him at least unquestioned and unquestionable—that alone gives Christianity its indestructible and exalting force within the Human Spirit, and which proclaims, in brief, *Jesus is Risen, Jesus is Reigning*—therefore let us so live and die, that we may meet Him at last with joy, not with shame and confusion !

V.

Once more, in the sublime spectacle of the Enthroned One and the Seven-Sealed Book and the Lamb as He had been Slain,—the accepted basis, on which all is made to rest, is the Resurrection of Jesus, once Dead, but now Alive for Evermore, and alone worthy to open the Seals, because God the Father hath given unto Him all authority in Heaven and on Earth. The Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Root of David, alone is mighty, alone is wise, to open the Book, and to break the Seven Seals. The Lamb as He had been slain, seven-horned, seven-eyed, surrounded by the Four Living Creatures, emblematic of the Material Universe, and by Four-and-Twenty Elders, representative of the Redeemed Church, took the Book out of the Hand of Him that sat on the Throne. Thereon the four living Creatures and the four-and-twenty Elders, having each one a Harp and golden bowls full of Incense, fell down before the Lamb, and sang this new song:—

“WORTHY ART THOU to take the Book and to open the Seals thereof; for Thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with Thy blood men of every tribe and tongue and people and nation . . .”¹

¹ Rev. v. 9.

Then came a second song, joined in this time by the many Angels round about the Throne, as well as by the living Creatures, and the Elders, "and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands," saying with a great voice—

"WORTHY IS THE LAMB that hath been slain to receive the power and riches and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing."¹

Finally, the whole Created Universe—Heaven, Earth, and Sea, and all things and all beings therein—joining the Name of the Lamb along with the Name of Him that sitteth on the Everlasting Throne, amidst the approving Amen of the four living Creatures and the adoring praise of the four-and-twenty Elders, sounded forth this Glorious ANTHEM from the Heavenly Places, which has ever since filled the Earth with music for all that have the ears to hear:—

*"Unto Him that sitteth on the Throne and unto the Lamb, be the blessing and the honour and the glory and the dominion, for ever and ever. Amen."*²

Well, then, on one understanding, all this is thinkable, but on no other—that the Lamb of God, once slain on Calvary, had risen from the Dead, and was now reigning at God's right hand. At any rate, it is not permissible even to suggest

¹ Rev. v. 12.

² Ibid. v. 13.

that the man who wrote this Book, or the men who received it as a portion of the Word of God, ever had, or could have had, any other than the most perfect and absolute assurance that Jesus ascended from the Dead and sat down on the Throne of the Heavens. We stand to-day where they stood at the dawn of Christianity, when we point to the empty Tomb of Jesus and cry,—*He is risen! Come, see the place where the Lord lay!* We teach what they taught when we lift our eyes up to the clouds cleft in twain and cry, Behold the Saviour ascended to the Heavens! See Him set down at the right hand of the Majesty on High!

VI

At the opening of the Sixth Seal there is another glorious illustration of our theme—the risen and reigning Jesus being there introduced to us as the Lamb which is in the midst of the Throne, Who feedeth His Flock like a Shepherd by the Water of Life.

It comes to us thus. The opening of the Sixth Seal is followed by “earthquakes”¹ and the most terrific portents of Judgment and of the End of all. But these are suspended, as it were, for a season, at the cry of the “Angel from the Sun-

¹ Rev. vi. 12.

rising" with the Seal of the living God in his hand, binding the four Angels of Doom at the four corners of the Earth to hold back their winds of destruction till the *Sealing of the Servants of God*¹ had been completed. Then there are sealed, first of all, twelve thousand out of each of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, "a hundred and forty and four thousand"² Souls. Thereafter were sealed "a Great Multitude, which no man could number, out of every Nation, and of all Tribes and Peoples and Tongues."³ These all are seen "standing before the Throne and before the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palms in their hands"; and they cry with a great Voice, saying :—

"Salvation unto our God which sitteth on the Throne,

And unto the Lamb."

Whereon the Angels and the Elders and the living Creatures "fell on their faces" with the adoring cry :—

"Amen !

*Blessing, and Glory, and Wisdom, and Thanks-
giving,*

And Honour, and Power, and Might,

Be unto our God for ever and ever,

*Amen !"*⁴

¹ Rev. vii. 1-3.

² Ibid. vii. 9.

³ Ibid. vii. 4.

⁴ Ibid. vii. 9-12.

Now, it is in answer to the question—"These which are arrayed in the White Robes, who are they? and whence came they?" that we have the most memorable and the most blessed description of the Heavenly Peace after Earthly turmoils, and also of the function and the ministry of the Lamb of God in the Fields of Paradise :—

"These are they which come out of the Great Tribulation,

And they washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb.

Therefore are they before the Throne of God ;
And they serve Him day and night in His Temple ;

And He that sitteth on the Throne shall spread His Tabernacle over them.

They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more ;

Neither shall the Sun strike upon them, nor any heat ;

For the Lamb which is in the midst of the Throne shall be their Shepherd,

And shall guide them unto Fountains of Waters of Life ;

And God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes." ¹

¹ Rev. vii. 13-17.

VII

In the same category, so far as our present study is concerned, are all these portions of this Book wherein the LAMB OF GOD comes upon the scene—the Lamb, once slain and buried, now risen and reigning.

(a) For example, behold “the Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him a hundred and forty and four thousand, having His Name and the Name of His Father written on their foreheads.”¹ These are “they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. These were purchased from among men—the Firstfruits unto God and unto the Lamb.”² We see the Christ of the Resurrection, followed thus by those whom He had ransomed, and raised to share His glory in the Heavenly life, the blessed pastures of Paradise.

(b) Or again, listen to the Voice of the great multitudes singing over the Fall of Babylon, as the voice of many waters and as the voice of mighty thunders:—

“Hallelujah !

For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth.
Let us rejoice, and be exceeding glad,
And let us give the Glory unto Him ;

¹ Rev. xiv. 1.

² Ibid. xiv. 4.

For the Marriage of the Lamb is come,
And His Wife hath made herself ready." ¹

The Risen Christ thus returns to claim His Own; and those raised up to share His joy are the blessed Souls who are bidden to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

(c) Yet once more, the presupposition of the Resurrection of Jesus underlies, and alone makes possible, the Vision of the Open Heavens and "the Rider upon the White Horse," Who is called "Faithful and True," on Whose head are "many Diadems," and Who hath on His garment and on His thigh a Name written:—

KING of kings and LORD of lords." ²

Who can this be? we ask in adoring wonder. Whose Name is called "The Word of God?" Who is arrayed in "a garment sprinkled with blood?" Who ruleth the Nations "with a Rod of Iron?" Who treadeth "the Winepress of the fierceness of the Wrath of Almighty God; and Who is followed by "the Armies which are in Heaven upon White Horses, clothed in fine linen, white and pure?" ³ Who can it be but Jesus Christ, the Risen and Reigning Redeemer, the King of kings? No shadowy Ghost is here, no vanishing apparition, but the glorified, im-

¹ Rev. xix. 6, 7.

² Ibid. xix. 11, 12, 16.

³ Ibid. xix. 13, 14, 15.

mortal, and incorruptible Son of Man, who reigneth throughout the whole ransomed Universe. Blot out the fact of the Resurrection of Jesus, and you blot out the possibility of this Vision of Glory.

(d) Finally, let us take only one other instance. In the description of the Holy Jerusalem as the Bride, the Wife of the Lamb, the crowning feature is the Lamb Himself :—

“ I saw no Temple therein ;

For the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb,
Are the Temple thereof.

The City hath no need of the Sun,
Neither of the Moon, to shine upon it ;
For the Glory of God did lighten it,
And the Lamp thereof is the Lamb.

And the Nations shall walk amidst the Light
thereof ;

And the Kings of the Earth do bring their glory
into it.

And the Gates thereof shall in no wise be
shut by day—

For there shall be no Night there ;
And they shall bring the Glory and the Honour
of the Nations into it ;
And there shall in nowise enter into it any-
thing unclean,
Or he that maketh an abomination and a lie ;

But only they which are written in the
Lamb's Book of Life.
And he showed me a River of Water of Life,
bright as Crystal,
Proceeding out of the Throne of God and of
the Lamb,
In the midst of the Street thereof.
And on this side of the River, and on that, was
the Tree of Life,
Bearing twelve manner of fruits,
Yielding its fruit every month,
And the Leaves of the Tree were for the
Healing of the Nations.
And there shall be no Curse any more ;
And the Throne of God and of the Lamb shall
be therein ;
And His Servants shall do Him service ;
And they shall see His Face ;
And His Name shall be on their foreheads.
And there shall be Night no more ;
And they need no light of Lamp, neither light
of Sun ;
For the Lord God shall give them light ;
And they shall reign for ever and ever."¹
Now, through all these glowing and glorious
pictures we must ever carry with us the out-
standing Characteristic of the Vision, as it first

¹ Rev. xxi. 22, 27 ; xxii. 1-5.

burst on the Seer's gaze—*A Lamb as it had been Slain, standing in the midst of the Throne.* Calvary is there ; and that is followed by Joseph's Sepulchre ; and that by the Resurrection of Jesus ; and that by the Ascension and Enthronement of the Son of Man in the Heavenly World. If Jesus be not risen, there is no Lamb of God on the Throne—no Glorified Humanity in the Heavenly Places ; but only a ghost, a spirit, an influence, a presence—an Immortal *Something*, but not an Immortal *Person* ! He who smites down the fact of the Resurrection of Jesus, strikes all the wonder and glory that cluster around the Bridegroom and His Bride down into the dust and ashes, where Jesus of Nazareth still wastes away and waits, amongst the rest of the Dead, the Call of God for Him as for Lazarus, to arise and come forth from His tomb.

At any rate, it is proved, it has been demonstrated, beyond all possibility of reasonable question, that the Man who wrote this Book, the Man to whom its conceptions were even thinkable, believed in the Resurrection of Jesus as truly as he believed in his own existence, and saw in the Heavens the Risen and Reigning Redeemer as truly as he saw any object on Earth or any fact in Time.

CONCLUDING SURVEY.

We stand where the Apostles stood. We worship and obey, as they did, the resurrected and glorified Son of Man, as not only Saviour of the World, but Sovereign of the Universe.

Nor can we find fitter words wherewith to close this Biblical Study of the Resurrection—with a view to estimating its unique place and supreme value in the life and teaching of Apostolic men and Apostolic days—than those which not only assume as unquestionable the fact that Jesus *has* risen from the Dead, but also affirm with equal emphasis the faith that Jesus *will* return again :—

“He which testifieth these things saith—

Yea ; I come quickly !”

Let us live the Resurrection-Life ; let us treasure the Resurrection-Faith ; and our souls shall be swift to answer :—

*“Amen ! Come, Lord Jesus.”*¹

¹ Rev. xxii. 20.

FINIS.

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